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Screen

**Crisis in Film Education : The BFI and Film Education /
Experiment at Tyneside / American Film Institute**

**Articles on German Expressionism
Film in the University
The Wood/Lovell Debate**

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SOVKINO IS NOW BEING ATTACKED FROM SEVERAL DIRECTIONS. IT'S NECESSARY TO TAKE UP THESE DIRECTIONS SEPARATELY FOR THEY ARE NOW TOO INTERWOVEN WITH SUCH QUESTIONS AS TO WHETHER THE DIRECTOR OF SUCH-AND-SUCH A NEWSPAPER CALLED ON SCHVEDCHIKOV, AND WHETHER SCHVEDCHIKOV RECEIVED HIM OR THREW HIM OUT – WE SHOULDN'T FORGET THAT WE ARE DISCUSSING MATTERS OF CINEMATOGRAPHY. BUT WE GO ON TALKING ABOUT TRAININ, BLYAKHIN, SCHVEDCHIKOV – YET WE SHOULD BE SORRY FOR SUCH PEOPLE. WHY PLACE THEM IN POSITIONS FOR WHICH THEY'VE HAD NO TRAINING? . . . HERE IS ORGANISATION WITHOUT CORRECT BASIS. WE SEE FINANCIAL ORGANISATION, ADMINISTRATIVE APPARATUS, AND EVERYTHING ELSE STARTING TO TRADE WITH NOTHING TO TRADE. WE DO NOT HAVE THE MERCHANDISE AND WE WON'T HAVE IT, UNTIL THE QUESTION OF CINEMATIC CULTURE IS SETTLED.

VLADIMIR
MAYAKOVSKY
(1927)

Dear Colleagues,

The six signatories of this letter, all members of the Education Department, have resigned from the Institute.

Our motives were mixed and some of us had personal reasons for wanting to leave but our resignations were precipitated by the continuing crisis of the BFI. This crisis, which is a general one having consequences for all sections of the Institute, has directly affected the Education Department in the past year. During this period we have lived in a state of permanent uncertainty about our future without support or guidance from management. In this atmosphere we have felt unsettled and profoundly frustrated. We know that this feeling is shared by other colleagues in the Department.

All of us have worked in the Education Department long enough (our terms of service range from fourteen to two years) to be deeply committed to its work so that the decision to resign was not an easy one to take particularly as the collective effect of our leaving might be the complete disintegration of the Department. However, as the likely alternative seemed to be the slow erosion of our work through demoralisation we thought it better to bring the situation into the open.

The specific causes of our discontent can be stated simply. They are:

1. In March the Governors Committee on Educational Services, consisting of Professor Asa Briggs (Chairman), Mrs Helen Forman and Mr Paul Adorian, produced a report on the Department which was critical of its activities. We don't think we are being oversensitive to criticism in objecting to the Report for the following reasons:
 - (a) The Report was produced in a hasty and ill-considered fashion. The Governors, none of whom had any experience in film education, felt able to pronounce on our work on the basis of one three-hour meeting. The Head of the Department was only allowed to attend this meeting for twenty minutes during which time no criticism was made of the Department and he was asked a number of seemingly innocuous questions.
 - (b) The Committee did not carry out its terms of reference. It was asked to look into the Institute's educational services as a whole as well as the work being done by the British Universities Film Council, the British Industrial and Scien-

tific Film Association and the National Council for Visual Aids in Education. It confined its investigations to the Education Department and the Society for Education in Film and Television.

- (c) The Report is demonstrably ill-informed on a factual level. We have documented this in a commentary on the Report we produced for the Director. The general picture of the Department that emerged from the Report was that it did not give enough attention to providing practical services for teachers and lecturers; that it was too narrow in its concern with film as art and entertainment; and that members of staff spent too much time on 'sophisticated research' and 'personal writing and lecturing'.

The bulk of the Department's energies and time are devoted to giving practical help to teachers through our Advisory Service, the Lecture Agency, the provision of Film Study Materials and our publications. We are proud of our achievements in this field and we bitterly resent the suggestion we neglect it. We are content however to be judged by those members of staff with some knowledge of our work and the thousands of teachers and lecturers we have helped over the years.

The suggestion that we spend a lot of time on personal writing and lecturing, and perhaps by implication feathering our own nest, is ludicrous. It is also impertinent coming from people who did not bother to find out the facts.

Lecturing by staff has been drastically reduced. In 1965-66 Education Department staff gave 266 lectures out of a total of 790 arranged by the Lecture Agency. In 1970-71 the figures were 80 lectures out of a total of 945. Over the years members of the Department have contributed articles on film education to various educational journals and have sometimes contributed to new critical journals like *Cinema* and *The Brighton Film Review* inevitably without payment. Over six years members of the Department have personally written only three books.

It is hardly worth pointing out that the bulk of this work is done in private time. In any case it surprises us that at the Film Institute the idea of people seeing films and thinking about them should be regarded with suspicion. Teachers and lecturers who come to us for help expect us to have some knowledge of film and education and the relationship between them. That we have tried to deepen our knowledge of these areas is not something we feel a need to be defensive about.

- (d) Unlike other Governors Committees such as those on the Archive, the Regional Theatre and Publications, staff participation was reduced to a minimum. When the Committee

was first established we were asked by the Director if we would like to nominate any particular Governor to serve. We made such a nomination but were later told that our nominee was 'quite unacceptable'. The Governor in question was never informed. After the Report was produced in its first draft (the final version remained virtually unaltered) the Head of the Department attended a second meeting of the Committee and presented the arguments outlined in this letter. He also made a specific request that the Committee should meet members of the Department to get a closer sense of their work and also representative educational users of the Institute to obtain some better understanding of their needs and problems. Not only was this request rejected but the Head of the Department was told by the Chairman of the Committee that the Report must be regarded as a confidential Governors paper and could not be discussed either with his colleagues on the Senior Executive or with members of his staff whose jobs would be affected by the recommendations of the Report.

- (e) We have always tried to describe and justify the work of the Education Department. We presented a paper to the Committee summarising our position. Each year we produce a Report saying what we have done, who has done it and why. This Report is made available to the Governors, Management and to teachers, lecturers and others in the film education movement.

Yet the Governors felt no need to justify their conclusions and simply asserted them as if they were self-evidently correct.

2. The treatment of the Society for Education in Film and Television has been equally shabby. Since the Society has had two paid officers, it and the Education Department have been able to work in closer collaboration on the basis of an agreement that ensured that the services provided by both bodies are complementary. Part of this agreement, which was worked out in consultation with the Director, was that the senior officer of the Society should act as Secretary and as Editor of the Society's journal *Screen*.

A meeting of the Governors Committee was held to discuss SEFT. Officers of the Society were present and they felt they got a sympathetic hearing. The next day however the Governors Publications Committee met, discussed *Screen* in isolation from the work of the Society and the Department and decided that the money being made available to *Screen* should be savagely cut. As this money comes out of the general grant to SEFT this in effect meant a cut in the grant to the Society. Moreover, the reduction in grant proposed is such that the Society would no longer be able to maintain its office, so that its two paid officers

(Sam Rohdie and Diana Matias) would in effect be dismissed without anyone actually saying so! No report was drawn up, the matter simply being approved by Governors under Any Other Business. No request for additional money for *Screen* had been made which might have offered some pretext for the intervention of the Publications Committee. The Head of Publications in fact protested at the intervention. Not only were the officers of the Society not involved in any of these discussions, they did not even know they were taking place. Indeed, it is not clear that either committee knew of the action of the other. One person however, the Director, must have known as he was present at both meetings.

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It was also at this time that the Director began to say publicly that Mr Rohdie was the wrong man for the job despite the fact that he was on the Board that made the appointment. It should take little imagination to appreciate the anger generated by such contemptuous treatment of staff.

3. Throughout the entire period of the crisis as it affected the Department and SEFT the Director has consistently failed to give staff the support it has the right to expect. When it was first indicated to us that certain Governors were critical of the Department (Mrs Forman was mentioned sometimes in conjunction with others – the references were always vague), we asked the Director to arrange a meeting with staff and Governors concerned. Despite repeated requests no such meeting was arranged. Indeed, in our efforts to meet with Governors we were consistently frustrated and on one occasion rebuked.

At a meeting between staff, the Director and the then Chairman, Sir William Coldstream, held when the Department was housed in Old Compton Street, the Head of the Department asked specifically if the Director or Chairman had any criticism of the Department or any policy changes to propose. There was no response and indeed the Chairman said he had no knowledge of such criticism being made. Later when Mrs Forman had a costing done on the Department she then wrote to Sir William suggesting a reduction in the Department's work. We were not given the chance to check the accuracy of the costing, were not allowed to see the letter and despite a formal request were not able to find out how the Chairman had replied or even if he had replied.

To a written request by the Head of the Department made in April 1970 that the Chairman and Director should either defend the Department against such criticism or enter into proper policy discussions, the Director replied that the question was put in *oversimplified terms*. In a further memo of June 29, 1970, to the Director from the Head of the Department the issue was put in unequivocal terms:

'It seems to me, if the Chairman or the Director have criticisms of a department these should be stated fully and clearly so that the department concerned can either justify its position or change its policy. In the absence of this, one would certainly expect the department to be defended.'

In his reply of July 16 the Director ignored this issue, concentrating instead on the Governors Committee which had now been set up. He urged that we provide the Governors with examples of our works, sets of publications and so on:

'... a complete set of your Cinema One books should be made available and this should make an impressive array.'

The Governors were duly impressed and ruled that we should no longer contribute to Cinema One or indeed produce any such books of that kind. We also appealed to the Deputy Director and the Secretary for support. The Deputy Director replied that he could offer no such support. The Secretary did not respond.

The paper on our work and policy prepared for the Governors Committee was shown in advance to the Director and he was asked for his comments. He replied that it seemed a 'good document with which to start' but his only positive suggestion was that we should put in 'more crossheads' and 'number the paragraphs'.

However at the meeting of the Committee to discuss the draft of its Report he launched a general attack casting doubt on a wide range of the Department's activities. The Governors were duly impressed.

4. The costing of the Education Department obtained for Mrs Forman raised a hornet's nest. When the Department was able to inspect the figures it was revealed that the costing was inaccurate. It must be stressed that this was in *no way the fault of officers of the Accounts Department* but resulted from the fact that the Accounts Department had been given grossly misleading figures about the Distribution Library by the Head of Film Services. These concerned the use of Distribution Library films by other Departments. It was claimed that out of 13,000 bookings made in the year 5,000 were made *free* to other Departments, 2,000 of these being for the Education Department. A moment's reflection on such figures in terms of theatre time would show how preposterous they are. A proper calculation showed that the figure for the Education Department was closer to 200 rather than 2,000.

It is perhaps evidence of how removed Governors are from the day-to-day operation of the Institute that they should have accepted these figures without question when they were first presented to the Board on November 3, 1969.

In any case it was figures such as these that had concealed

for some time the very considerable loss being made by the Distribution Library. A new costing of all Departments revealed that the Library was losing something like £50,000 a year.

Rather than conduct a serious examination into why the Library was losing so much money in an expanding market desperate efforts were made to redeem the situation. Earlier this year it was proposed to abolish the educational discount and to raise hire charges by as much as 150 per cent on film study extracts (including the £6,000 worth of material presented free to the Library by the Schools Council) and up to 300 per cent in the case of some short films. At an enlarged meeting of the Senior Executive these proposals found no support and were withdrawn. Nevertheless they were put forward to Governors without any further consultation with the Executive and accepted.

At no point was the Education Department consulted although we negotiate with the film trade for the extracts that go into the Library and are in the best position to assess the likely effects of the increases upon education. To add to the confusion the decision was implemented in the most slipshod fashion. Each item in the Library was to be priced on an individual basis but no price list had been prepared in advance. Quite inadequate steps were taken to inform borrowers of the impending change and no clear instructions were issued to Library staff about how to deal with the problems that were bound to come up.

More fundamental, no thought was given to the likely consequence of imposing such savage increases without warning in the middle of a financial year. Anyone in the least familiar with film education and the state of educational finance knows that the greatest difficulty that those teaching film have is finding money for film hire. The consequence of this action will be a major setback to film education up and down the country. If this is so then it will not even achieve its limited objective of cutting back the loss on the Library. Indeed as some courses may be abandoned altogether it seems more likely to increase the deficit. An action that needed the most careful handling if it were not to bring further discredit upon the Institute has been taken in the clumsiest fashion possible. A detailed protest with suggestions about how the damage might be repaired was sent to the Director but never acknowledged.

We should make it clear that in making these judgments we attach no blame to Film Services staff. On the contrary it is they who have to bear the brunt of such ill-considered action and it is our impression that sections of Film Services would collapse if it were not for the loyalty and dedication of staff.

As far as we are concerned this whole episode with its combination of disregard for the problems of the teachers in the field and simple managerial inefficiency was the final blow to

our morale. A blow only slightly modified by the irony that this action was carried through by people loud in their claim that they are concerned with hard facts and practical realities while we in the Education Department live in a rarefied atmosphere.

For the sake of those who are remaining in the Department, our colleagues in SEFT and other members of staff who may suffer similar treatment we are placing our case formally before the Staff Committee.

Also, because we believe that too much of the Institute's business is conducted in secret and is therefore the subject of gossip and speculation we are lodging the relevant papers with the Staff Committee with a request that they be made available to any member of staff who wishes to see them.

In this letter we have naturally been concerned with issues that have affected the Education Department directly. We believe however that they will find an echo elsewhere as they are only a part of the general Institute crisis.

For some years now a series of improvisations and a kind of mindless energy has substituted for policy and a sense of priorities. Decisions have been made outside formal committee procedures with the Senior Staff bypassed and manipulation replacing staff consultation. The Governors, ill-informed but seemingly little aware of it, have remained impotent and bereft of ideas.

The result has been recurring financial crises, neglect of essential services, divisions among staff and public criticism. Throughout this period efforts of staff to rescue the situation have been persistently frustrated. A lengthy memorandum presented by the Heads of Education and Publications to the Senior Executive and covering all these issues was never even discussed.

A new Chairman has taken over and other changes will follow. As the Institute moves into a new phase it is difficult to predict the future. One thing is clear: the present structure must be radically changed. Unless it is and unless staff and members are seriously involved in shaping policy it will be impossible to generate the ideas necessary to allow the British Film Institute to play a central role in creating a film culture.

Eileen Brock
Alan Lovell
Jennifer Norman

Gail Naughton
Jim Pines
Paddy Whannel

August 1971

There is a distinct irony in *Screen* declaring its intention to develop a politics of film and of education, to devote itself to theory and criticism, only to find its budget cut by the British Film Institute from £6,000 to £500, to be accused by the Director of the Institute of being too 'theoretic [*sic*] and academic', to be entangled in a general crisis in film education provoked it seems by the British Film Institute, and yet to have little understanding of that crisis or any adequate terms for its analysis.

SEFT has asked the Institute to clarify its position towards film education – a position marked by hostility to ideas, enormous increases in the price of film materials to education, a conceptualisation of education in administrative and financial terms, an attempted dismantling of SEFT – but the responses received only add to our perplexity and confusion.

Uncertainty is all that is clear – it is not possible to dignify the actions taken by the Institute as 'policy' with the coherence that the term implies. Instead, the Institute seems to have adopted a number of positions, most of which appear contradictory, some mutually exclusive, and all apparently *ad hoc*, of the moment, and never in any case thought out.

Letters written to SEFT by the Governors, the Director and the Secretary of the Institute appear on the whole, when juxtaposed, to negate each other. The total effect is blur.

The Government of the Institute has stated that 'so long as [*Screen*] remains a predominantly theoretical and critical publication, the Governors are prepared to consider it only as one for a separate grant, which is unlikely to exceed £500 per annum . . .'. Our past grant was around £6,000.

But the Institute, according to its Chairman, is not 'anti-intellectual', is not hostile to ideas, to theory; on the contrary, the Governors 'wish to promote theoretical and practical research into film appreciation and film education' . . . they wish 'to stimulate research through grant-in-aid bodies such as your own . . .'.

Yet the Director has stated in the trade Press that *Screen* is having its budget reduced precisely because it is a theoretical journal. And the Secretary went so far as to propose that if *Screen* returned to its old format and devoted itself 'to practical advice to teachers and promotion in the field' then the Governors would consider restoring its grant.

SEFT has always considered *Screen* to be an integral part of the

- 10 Society and its policy. The decision to emphasise theoretical and critical issues in *Screen* was taken after long debate and serious consideration of the prime needs in film education, and the decision was taken by active film teachers.

The Institute maintains that SEFT is an independent body but if it pursues an independent policy, if it does not do what the Institute wants it to do, then its grant will be virtually cut off and the Society's main activity, *Screen*, brought to a close. Such are the limits of our independence and the respect for our competence as a professional organisation of film teachers.

Screen's demand for theory has been somehow characterised by the Governors as a neglect of 'practice'. Why this sterile and ultimately false polarity, 'practice' and 'ideas'? And why, more seriously, the valorisation of practice *as opposed to* ideas, as if advice to teachers about film and film education can be practised without a context of thought, a body of knowledge, to support such advice?

This fetish about practice was used as a basis for a critique by the Governors of their Education Department, whose work is predominantly one of direct servicing but which was characterised as almost exclusively 'intellectual'.

What the Governors do object to is 'any single doctrine or dogma within the Institute about film' and associate *Screen*, SEFT and the Education Department with dogmatism.

Anti-intellectual no longer, the Governors are now innocently undogmatic. Indeed, 'they believe in a plurality of educational theories and methods', in freedom, democracy, the right of the people to decide for themselves, 'to make up their own minds about the nature of film and its purpose in society . . . '.

So thorough is their pluralism, so clear 'the proper role of a public organisation in a democratic State', that 'the Governors . . . do not regard it as the function of the Institute to "shape a film culture" . . . '.

It is hard to see what the Governors mean by 'practice' (they have not practically defined it or concretised it in specific policy terms), unless it is a crude attempt to appeal to an endemic British prejudice.

It seems absurd that *Screen* must defend itself for having ideas about film and film education, and equally absurd that the *Education* Department of the Institute is criticised for stimulating and encouraging thought about film.

Is it the ideas themselves that the Governors object to? Or do they object to the simple possession of ideas?

What then is the function of the Institute? Or, more precisely, what is its practice? Surely, the management is being slightly disingenuous in describing the role of the Institute as simply pro-

viding information and facilities for people to reach their own conclusions.

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Information is never 'neutral' and the sort provided by the Institute functions in a manner expressly contrary to what the Institute says it does not do – 'develop and promulgate one particular film culture'.

The Governors do shape British film culture through *Sight and Sound*, through the regional theatres and the national theatre, through the archives.

Sight and Sound promotes the official film culture and a definite if unexamined critical line. The archives do have a select policy towards film acquisitions. There is a distinct ideology and politics of film in the regional theatres.

Indeed, the Institute's film culture is anything but pluralist. On the contrary, it is conservative, tends to inhibit, indeed oppose, serious criticism and understanding of film, and seeks to deal with cultural, artistic and intellectual problems in a purely administrative way (not with notable success).

The pluralism declared by the Institute in practice is a lie. To dissent from the official film culture sclerosed and maintained by the Institute as has been done by the Education Department and by SEFT, to be critical, to have ideas, to open up debate about film and at the same time expose the ideology and assumptions in the official film culture, is to the Institute to be dogmatic. The Institute's Government could hardly be more doctrinaire.

The crisis in film education provoked by the Governors of the Institute is itself educational. The Governors in an attempt to weaken SEFT and destroy *Screen* have strengthened both by forcing the Society to define more closely its terminology, its concepts and its practice and in the process of doing so more forcefully confront and oppose the ideas and actions of the Institute.

The main opposition to Institute policy towards the Education Department and towards SEFT has been from members of the Department and from the officers and members of SEFT. Opposition has not been general, has not involved many film teachers, or film critics. The major film magazines have chosen to be silent.

Articles on the Education Department have appeared in *The Guardian*, *The Times* and *Time Out*. These have been straight, factual reports and for the most part have not been sustained and certainly not resulted in public protest or the further asking of questions.

Such silence is extraordinary and certainly contrasts with what happened over the American Film Institute scandal in the United States (described in this issue of *Screen*) where the trade press, the national press, film magazines and film teachers openly debated the issues involved in the American Institute's assault on its Education and Research Section.

It is silence which has eased the work of the Institute's Governors – they can treat the matter as internal, parochial and purely administrative. What criticism there has been, since presented so discreetly as so many separate items, can be dealt with by makeshift arguments of the moment which for those unaware of the situation may seem convincing, or at least credible.

Why such silence? Is the lack of support for the Education Department, for SEFT a measure of these organisations' real failure? Why have they not built up a constituency, a movement of film teachers? Why have they not been able to interest let alone galvanise the larger film community about the situation in which they find themselves?

If there is an explanation for the general unconcern it goes beyond any actions taken or not by SEFT and the Education Department. The present crisis in the Institute is not the first and attempts to bring this crisis in Education to a wider group have failed as did the challenge to the Governors by members in December last year and by Governors themselves – Lindsay Anderson and Karel Reisz.

The problem which SEFT now faces is not the threat from the BFI but the lack of support from the larger film community and from educationists. Without such support SEFT has no power and more important without that support it is difficult for SEFT to formulate a clear practical policy for film education or to make its ideas expressed in *Screen* relevant to such a policy.

SEFT urges its members and the readers of *Screen* to attend the Society's Conference on October 23 at the National Film Theatre to discuss the present situation, to try to understand it and to formulate policies in accord with that understanding.

Alan Lovell

My resignation (along with five other people's from the staff of the Education Department of the British Film Institute) marked the end for me of ten years' close involvement with film education. Given the causes of the resignation, it's hard to view that involvement dispassionately. Resentment persistently disrupts the effort to do so. Resentment of particular people who played important roles in the destruction of the Education Department: Asa Briggs, the very model of a modern academic, Vice-Chancellor of Sussex University, practising historian (currently writing a history of the BBC), book reviewer, television adviser and personality who managed to spare three hours of his time to pass judgment on work that had involved a number of people for a considerable period of their lives; Helen Forman, a Governor who for three years was willing to express her prejudices against the Education Department so confidently but was unwilling to discuss them with the people whose work they could and did affect so radically. Resentment of a Management which endlessly evaded issues and improvised justifications for the chaos that surrounded it, unwilling to take any responsibility for what was happening and blaming whoever came conveniently to hand, Governors, staff, the DES, the Government. Resentment at an organisation that made it easy to spend £10 on a lunch and hard to show a film to a teacher; at the complacency of Governors, dimly aware that all was not well but too committed to preserving the status quo to examine the situation seriously.

While, as of now, resentment is strong, other more sympathetic responses occur. Most of all the pleasure of having been, as a member of the Education Department, one of a group of people who cared enough about both the cinema and education to do their work seriously and with enthusiasm. Going along with this, a respect for those people in the Institute who, while often working in a much less sympathetic atmosphere than that of the Education Department, revealed a similar commitment to their work and an independent spirit. More generally there was the excitement of seeing the cinema opened up by the efforts of critics and teachers; neglected or unconsidered films and film-makers being brought into critical debate; the old-British film ideologies being challenged; new ideas introduced.

If resentment disrupts efforts at a dispassionate analysis of the,

development of the Education Department and the relationship of this development to the British Film Institute as a whole, the more sympathetic responses strengthen the desire to make such an analysis. In the following mixture of description and analysis I have tried to understand what happened. In so far as resentment intrudes on this project, I hope it functions to sharpen the understanding.

The Development of the Education Department

Up until about 1960 film education was an adjunct of the 1930s Documentary movement, at least of the 'academic' wing of the movement which emerged in the immediate post-war years and whose position is representatively presented in books like Roger Manvell's *Penguins*, *Film* and *Film and the Audience*, and Ernest Lindgren's *Art of the Film*. The basic educational assumption was that films were a decisive influence in the formation of false social and moral values by children and young people. The Report of the Home Office's Committee on Children and the Cinema (the Wheare Report 1950) described this assumption very clearly:

A large number of films are exposing children regularly to the suggestion that the highest values in life are riches, power, luxury and public adulation and that it does not matter very much how these are attained or used. According to these films, you can eat your cake and have it too. You can be happy without much effort or hard work, so long as you have a lucky star or an influential patron or some brand of personal glamour which you are prepared to capitalise without much restraint of conscience. This general kind of easy and selfish philosophy is fringed with other supporting illusions involving the distortion of history and biography and of people of other nations and their national heroes.

Following from this, the task of film educationists was to protect children from such influences by teaching them to understand how the cinema worked and so leading them to appreciate good films rather than bad ones. The workings of the cinema were to be understood on the basis of aesthetic principles derived from Eisenstein (an Eisenstein both simplified and abstracted from the cultural context of the Soviet Union in the 1920s) by way of Grierson. The basic principles were that editing was the key act in the creation of a film; that a direct analogy could be made between film and language such that a shot equalled a word, a sequence a sentence, and so on; and that the cinema was inherently a realistic medium. These principles led to the valuing of the Soviet films of the 1920s, British documentary films of the 1930s, British feature films of the late 1940s (principally the work of Carol Reed and David Lean plus Ealing comedies) and Italian neo-realist films.

The BFI's educational work during the 1950s was solidly based in this position. The Education Department from the early 1960s was shaped from a different direction – basically Leavisite in, in-

spiration. The change was not the result of a conscious decision. But the change was probably inevitable given the decline of the documentary movement so that few young people were subject to its influence and the radical impact of Leavis and his followers on the teaching of English, in particular the concern with the effects of the mass media that was an integral part of that teaching. In the late 1950s and early 1960s changes in the media – the development of television, the increase in advertising, the emergence of ‘pop’ music – renewed this concern with its influence. Richard Hoggart’s *The Uses of Literacy* most obviously expresses this renewed concern. It is important to stress this because the influence of Hoggart and writers like Raymond Williams who expressed similar concern gave film education a populist impulse that was not a part of the orthodox Leavis position.

The Leavisite influence did not lead to a view of film education that was markedly different from that of the documentary-influenced one of the 1950s. The educational rationale was the same; film was seen as a decisive shaper of social and moral attitudes and the crucial task of the film educationist was to alert his pupils to that fact. One might well have expected a different set of films to be valued since, emerging out of literature, the Leavis position did not have a clear ‘politique’ of film attached to it. In fact the same kind of cinema was valued – cinema of a social realist kind – though more contemporary expressions of it, like Polish cinema and Free Cinema.

Two important differences can be seen. The first was over critical method. The Leavis position with its stress on the work of art as an integrated, organic whole was hostile to the technical, analytic methods of the documentary tradition (the analysis of editing sequences, the breaking down of film into shots, etc).

Other differences might have emerged if the Leavisite position had become, as the documentary-inspired version of film education had, the dominant ideology of film education backed by the resources of the Institute’s Education Department. In 1955 Stanley Reed, then responsible for film education at the Institute, could write:

The cinema probably provides the best example of a mass medium exercising major influences on taste, opinion and social and moral behaviour whose problems have been systematically explored; there is already a body of formulated opinion in Britain derived from practical experience, on aims and methods of aesthetic adjustment to cinema, and much experiment both in schools and in the sphere of adult education, has taken place. A stage has been reached when aims and principles can be put forward confidently and methods expounded in some detail.

Such confidence would have been misplaced in 1965 since the aims and principles of film education were very much in question. Also in question was the relationship of the Education Department to

The assumptions about film education derived from Leavis's ideas were attacked from a number of directions. The contradictions inherent in adapting those ideas, which had been derived from a study of literature, to the study of the cinema became apparent; it was difficult to accept Leavis's basic hostility to technology and commercialism if one were to take the cinema at all seriously; the account of cultural history as a process of decline, with the new media as important agents in the process, was hardly consistent with an enthusiasm for the cinema. Sociological studies of the effects of the media challenged the assumption that the cinema was a decisive moulder of moral and social values; this challenge was of central importance since the cinema's supposed influence on children's attitudes had been the key justification of all film education. *Cahier du Cinéma's* valuing of the American cinema (mediated in this country through the magazine *Movie*) upset simple assumptions about what were good and bad films; and the ingrained British preference for realism in the cinema was put under some pressure. The changes in critical preferences that the new estimates of Hitchcock, Hawks, Fuller, etc. produced raised the question of 'taste' as the basis for criticism and film education.

If these attacks made it difficult for a Leavisite-based view to become the dominant ideology of film education, changes in the Education Department and in the field of film education as a whole made it impossible for the Education Department to carry out its previous role as the promoter and sustainer of a particular ideology. During the 1960s more resources were made available to the Education Department, making it possible for the Department to give a wider range of help to film teachers. At the same time film education expanded a good deal, mainly as the result of the space created in the curriculum by such developments as the growth of liberal studies in Further Education and the breakdown of subject teaching and its replacement by integrated studies and topic teaching.

This growth of both the Education Department and film education in general posed the question of what the role of the Education Department should be and how it should relate itself to film education. In the 1950s, when the Education Department had consisted of one man with very limited resources at his disposal and when there were probably no more than twenty film teachers, the relationship was no problem. In the 1960s the two separated out; on the one hand there was a bureaucratic administrative set up with certain resources; on the other, a group of teachers, working in different education situations and having specific but varying needs.

The Education Department first saw its relationship to film teaching as primarily a servicing one. The services the Department offered to film teachers were extended and systematised. The supply of film extracts was a good example of this change. In the early 1960s the acquisition of extracts was primarily the responsibility

of the Distribution Library. The extract collection was a small one mainly designed to support the documentary ideology of film education (the extracts were in the main from post-war British films, neo-realist films or 1930s documentary). It had been put together on a beg, borrow or steal principle. The Education Department realised that if film teachers were to be properly supported in this area, the extract collection would have to be increased and varied. It therefore took over responsibility for the acquisition of extracts and placed acquisition on a more businesslike basis. Distributors were approached for a batch of extracts at a time and offered a fee for each extract they were willing to provide. In this way the number of extracts was increased and the whole collection made more representative. Other services that the Department offered (the teacher advisory service, publications) were similarly systematised.

This emphasis on a servicing function carried out in a professional manner was probably a defining characteristic of the Education Department for most of the 1960s. And in so far as the Department could claim a definite success, it would be in this area. However, its success raised the problem of the Department's responsibility for the development of an ideology of film education. The existing ideologies, Leavisite or documentary, were proving unsatisfactory, yet the Education Department was not in a position to develop alternatives. Its staff didn't have the equipment for doing so, and certainly not the time. And the fact that the Department had a key position in film education because of its servicing role meant that it needed to be particularly sensitive to *not imposing* an ideology on film education through its control over key materials, *as in fact had been the case during the 1950s*.

This dilemma was resolved by the introduction of the concept of a film culture. The Department's role was seen as supporting and sustaining a film culture. In so far as it was defined precisely, a film culture was seen as a situation where a large number of people, critics, teachers, film-makers, film society members, etc, would have regular access to as wide a variety of films as possible; where there were several film magazines representing different viewpoints as well as the regular publication of books; where there were easy opportunities for systematic study and discussion of the cinema; where regular contact was made between critics, teachers, film-makers and informed audiences. If such a situation could be created, the conditions would be present for the development of varying ideologies of film which would feed through into film education.

The film culture that existed in Britain at that time contained some of these features. But it was generally an inert and poverty-stricken culture. The Institute could not make it into something rich and dynamic by its own efforts. But any serious improvement depended on the kind of support and encouragement that only the

The Education Department did what it could to help. It made special arrangements to meet the many requests for film viewings that come to the Institute; in conjunction with the University of London Extra-Mural Department it established a diploma course in film study; a special series of seminars was arranged to involve people from other intellectual disciplines in the study of film – the papers given at these seminars were made freely available; the Summer School was made more systematic by concentrating on one topic; half the books produced in the Cinema One series were the Education Department's responsibility. But such efforts were inevitably limited. The backing of the Film Institute as a whole was needed to give such a culture adequate support.

The British Film Institute

Unfortunately, at a time when the concept of a film culture needed the support of the whole Institute if it were to be made a reality, the Institute was in a state of crisis. This crisis was marked by financial instability; for two years all spending was stopped three months before the end of the financial year because of over-spending. It was marked by dissension among the staff and the Governors; staff criticism which had been muted over a considerable period eventually, when it became clear that the Management was unresponsive to criticism, took the form of a letter signed by a majority of the senior staff sent to the Governors; dissension among the Governors led to the resignation of two of them, Lindsay Anderson and Karel Reisz. Finally, it was marked by public criticism which expressed itself most dramatically in the efforts of the Members' Action Group to dismiss the Governors.

This crisis had two aspects. One was a simple administrative failure. The Institute's Management showed a persistent contempt for administrative and financial problems. New schemes were entered into without their financial implications being properly considered or their likely effect on the rest of the Institute being taken into account. Existing sections of the Institute were neglected so that they gradually ran down. Decisions were taken without consulting people who would be affected by them. The other aspect was a policy one. No attempt was made to define a policy for the Institute as a whole, so that Departments worked in isolation without supporting each other's efforts except where individual members of staff were prepared to cross departmental boundary lines. Policy was never properly discussed, yet new policies were put into operation; since they weren't discussed, the assumptions behind these new policies often proved disastrously ill-considered.

I'll try to describe these two aspects more precisely and the way they interacted with each other through a narrative of the Institute's development since 1965, but before I begin this it's worth notice that the Institute is a curious organisation. It is the oldest

of the State-supported arts organisations in this country – it was founded in 1934 yet it has never convincingly defined its function. The usual function for an arts organisation is to support art forms unable to support themselves in the normal commercial way but which are considered of sufficient cultural value for the State to want to preserve them. The cinema has never been in this position. Even at the present time when it is suffering a large decline in its fortunes it is still a viable commercial proposition.

As it was first conceived, the Institute was seen as essentially a defensive organisation which would try to improve the level of public taste so that the cinema would not continue to have the detrimental effect on public morals and behaviour it was then thought to be having. But this function was never defined precisely enough for it to make the Institute into a coherent or positive organisation. In practice the Institute has engaged in some useful activities – archiving, distribution, exhibition – but in rather a desultory fashion. Its history has therefore followed a pattern of periods of mediocrity punctuated by crises and inquiries. It has only once broken from this pattern: in the early 1950s with the establishment of the National Film Theatre and the reconceiving of *Sight and Sound*.

In 1964–65 two important changes in the Management of the Institute occurred. A new Director, Stanley Reed, was appointed (Reed had previously been the Secretary of the Institute and its first Education Officer) and then a new Chairman of Governors, Sir William Coldstream. The organisation they took control of was quiescent. Its main features were an Archive, obsessed with the technicalities of preservation and little interested in making available the films it devoted some ingenuity to preserving; and the National Film Theatre and *Sight and Sound*, both of which were well known and respected – but their reputations had been gained in the 1950s and with the disappearance of key figures like Lindsay Anderson, Karel Reisz and Gavin Lambert they were both much diminished in flair and liveliness.

The new appointments came at a good time. The 1964 Labour Government, partly because of its admiration for the Kennedy style of government and partly because of Jenny Lee's prestige, made more money available to the arts. Substantial increases in the grant were asked for and obtained by the Institute.

The largest part of this increased grant was devoted to the establishing of a chain of regional film theatres throughout the country. This scheme was crucial to understanding all later developments in the Institute. The basic idea behind it was a good and important one: the Institute's work should not be confined to London and that one of the most useful ways of extending it outside was by making it possible for a wider range of films to be seen. In practice the particular form the scheme took and the way it was implemented resulted in the objective being achieved only

20 in a limited and unsatisfactory way and the work of the Institute being generally disrupted.

The regional scheme took the form of establishing regional theatres wherever some local interest and support revealed itself. Theatres were established in major centres of population like Bristol and Sheffield and in small or remote places like Aldeburgh or Street. The policy behind this particular strategy was never clearly justified; the usual justification offered was that was the way Jenny Lee and the DES wanted it. However, occasional remarks and comments suggested that the strategy was not simply imposed on the Institute but was the outcome of a particular view of the state of the cinema.

This view was that the decline of the cinema was partly due to the bad films shown in the cinema. The Institute could recover or create a new audience for the cinema by showing good films. So the Regional Theatres were seen as the basis for a 'high quality' circuit which would eventually replace the traditional ABC and Rank circuits. Since the strategy was never discussed openly, the naïveté of the assumptions it was based on didn't become immediately apparent. The decline of the cinema is a social fact, not an aesthetic one; neither good nor bad films will bring back the kinds of audiences the cinema had in the 1930s and '40s – the destruction of television and the motor car along with a lower standard of living might. And the distinction between good and bad films is not such an easy one to make; in practice the regional theatres have simply expressed a particular aspect of contemporary taste, providing mainly contemporary European films with a few classic films (a Buster Keaton or a *Grapes of Wrath*) and the odd controversial choice (an underground movie or a film rejected by the circuits) thrown in.

The naïveté of these assumptions had no practical effect until the Institute decided to vary the way in which the theatres were run. Most of the theatres were joint ventures between the Institute and local interests with a specific guarantee against loss. In practice these theatres operated like slightly expanded versions of film societies. They showed much the same kind of films as film societies might, they operated on the same limited basis (one or two nights a week, one week a month). They probably had better technical facilities (35mm instead of 16mm) and access to some films that weren't available to film societies. They were essentially small-scale experiments, risking little and gaining little. It might be argued that despite the extra money and resources they had at their disposal, they were achieving little more than film societies did on the basis of voluntary effort. It also might have been more sensible to have organised the scheme through the Federation of Film Societies rather than creating a new large department in the Institute to run it. But these issues were not of major importance.

However, the Management of the Institute became impatient

with this small-scale activity and decided that one or two theatres should be run on more ambitious lines directly by the Institute. Two such theatres were established, one in Newcastle and the other in Brighton. They operated on a full-time basis and the guarantee against loss was wholly a charge on the Institute rather than being shared with local groups. Their programmes were inevitably more extensive than those of the other theatres.

These theatres decisively undermined the assumption that there was in existence an audience for good films who were kept away from the bad films provided by the existing circuits. Attendances were persistently below the anticipated level, each year the guarantee against loss having to be increased. Every optimistic forecast of their potential made by the Regional Controller was contradicted by the box-office returns. The situation of the Brighton theatre has now become so bad that the Governors have decided that unless attendances significantly improve during the next six months the theatre will have to be closed.

This policy failure was matched by an administrative one. The staffing of the Regional Department was never properly related to the rate at which new theatres were opened, so that basically the same number of staff had to cope with a much larger number of theatres. The effect of the whole scheme on the rest of the Institute was never taken into account. A department like the Regional one was bound to make demands on Institute services like accounts, transport, film booking services, information services. No allowance was made for this, so that other departments had increased demands made on them without proper resources to cope with them.

Apart from the demands caused by Regional expansion, increased demands on the Institute generally occurred because of the developing minority, intellectual interest in the cinema that occurred during the 1960s. Little attempt was made to cope with these demands. The neglect of the Distribution Library was the most scandalous example of this failure. Despite increased demand for its films, the Library's staff remained almost static, little extra money was made available for the acquisition of new films or for the replacement of worn-out copies of existing films, booking and handling procedures were not revised. The result of this was that the Library came to offer the worst service of all the major distribution libraries; through cumbersome procedures, over a considerable period of time it was possible to book scratched and damaged copies of a miscellaneous collection of films. The Library was allowed to continue in this fashion until it was discovered this year that it was losing £50,000 a year.

By 1968 the first clear signs of a crisis were apparent. The most obvious signs were financial crises in the years 1967-68 and 1968-69. In 1968-69 the crisis was so serious that only a special grant from the Arts Council enabled the Institute to overcome it (the

Arts Council is not a channel of money for the Institute, so the grant was rather an exceptional one which seems to have been made possible by the fact that Sir William Coldstream was both Chairman of the Institute and Vice-Chairman of the Arts Council). It was never absolutely clear how these crises came about. What was clear was that the Management either had no firm grip on the financial situation or felt no strong obligation to work within its budget. That this was the case was acknowledged by the DES, which at the beginning of 1969 sent the Institute a letter warning it to exercise tighter control over its budget; to back this warning up it announced that the Institute's annual grant would not be made in a lump sum during the next financial year but by monthly payments.

At this point criticism of the Institute began to come from three different sources. There was internal criticism from staff; the strongest form this took was a memorandum from the Heads of Publication and Education which raised a number of issues but particularly the question of who was responsible for the running of the Institute – they felt that though they were members of the Executive they had little knowledge of and no responsibility for most of the important decisions that were taken. There was criticism from some of the Institute's members whose principal spokesman was Maurice Hatton; this criticism was ill-defined but mainly directed at the Institute's lack of a policy. Most important, the Governors started to make criticisms of the way the Institute was likely to exercise this control. A disparate group of people meeting once a month, most of whom have commitments that are much more important to them than the Institute, are unlikely to be a particularly active body. An adroit Chairman of Governors working closely with the Director should normally be able to control their interest in the workings of the Institute. It was a measure of the Management's failures that this was no longer possible. Governors' criticism of the existing state of affairs began to manifest itself through the setting up of sub-committees to look at particular areas of the Institute's work.

Management's reaction to all of this criticism was generally to ignore it or to placate it in a public relations manner. The memorandum from the Heads of Publications and Education was not discussed, despite several efforts by the signatories. An attempt was made to soothe the group of members led by Maurice Hatton through private, informal discussion.

Most instructive about the Institute's way of meeting criticism was its reaction to the criticism of short film-makers. Round about 1967 both the Short Film-makers Campaign and the Short Film Service made criticisms of the Institute's attitude to short films; mainly on the grounds that the Institute showed little interest and was contemptuous of the short film form. A committee was set up to consider these criticisms. That this was an attempt to disarm

criticism rather than to take it seriously was shown by the way no pressure was put on the committee to do so. It meandered on for three years before producing a report. In the meantime a member of the Short Film-makers Campaign, through a contact he had with a Governor, set up a meeting between the Campaign and the Institute. The Institute representatives at the meeting, who included the Director as well as some Governors, attempted to reassure the short film-makers about the Institute's attitude to the short film. No mention was made of the fact that there was a committee looking into these attitudes; so far as one can tell the Governors were as much in ignorance of this as the short film-makers.

A little later the committee produced its report. It was critical of some aspects of the Institute's policy towards the short film and made suggestions for improvements. It was agreed that the Executive should discuss the report to see if the suggestions could be implemented. For a year the Executive never found the time to discuss the report. One week after a group of staff sent a letter to the Governors that was generally critical of the Institute's administrative chaos and which made prominent mention of the failure to deal with the Short Film Committee's report, the Executive found the time to discuss the report. Several of its suggestions were accepted. One year after that discussion not one of these suggestions has been implemented.

The criticism that it was most difficult for the Management to deal with was that of the Governors, particularly as this was now reinforced by the criticisms of two new Governors, Lindsay Anderson and Karel Reisz. Anderson and Reisz attacked from a different point of view than the rest of the Governors. They showed more interest in the Institute's policy than in its administration and were particularly critical of the policies of *Sight and Sound* and the National Film Theatre. Anderson argued that *Sight and Sound* expressed the taste of a coterie and that it ignored important areas of the cinema. Reisz criticised National Film Theatre programming for lacking a coherent and intelligent sense of the cinema. Their criticisms carried great weight with the Governors, partly because of their prestige as film-makers, partly because they had direct experience of the workings of the Institute (Reisz was the NFT's first programme planner and Anderson had been involved with both the NFT and *Sight and Sound*), and partly because some of the criticisms meshed in with their own prejudices (this was particularly the case so far as *Sight and Sound* was concerned).

By 1970 the crisis had significantly deepened – as it was bound to, since no serious effort had been made to cope with it. Anderson and Reisz were pressing their criticisms even more strongly. Staff discontent reached a point where a majority of the senior staff sent a letter to Governors that was broadly critical of the way the Institute was run. Members' criticism took a new form with the forma-

tion of an Action Group with the aim of dismissing the Governors at the Annual General Meeting.

It seemed that some changes must come. Anderson and Reisz were the key figures in this. They had prestige as film-makers, some knowledge of how the Institute worked, some conception of what its functions might be, and, most important of all, as Governors they had power. Their obvious course was to unite with staff; an alliance of influential Governors with a substantial group of senior staff would have been a powerful one. For self-declared radicals like Reisz and Anderson it would also have seemed to be the principled course of action to take. But this was not the course they chose. They ignored the staff letter and directed their efforts to persuading the Governors to ask the Minister for the Arts to set up a review of the Institute. When a majority of Governors resisted this suggestion, as they were likely to since to ask for a public inquiry would be to openly admit that something was wrong, Anderson and Reisz resigned. They made some attempt to influence Lord Eccles' thinking about the Institute, but now seem to have opted out.

The remaining Governors continued with the private inquiry they proposed as an alternative to a public one. Public accounts of this inquiry have always stated that it was a policy review and in no sense a critical investigation. However, the signs are that this is not the case. The inquiry has been almost completely private, with the Director being generally excluded except for a few brief appearances. The Governors have shown a particular interest in finance and administration, and the one positive recommendation to have come out of a year's meetings has been that a new senior administrative officer should be appointed.

That the committee had not devoted much time to policy considerations is further confirmed by their failure to produce any account of their discussions. The minutes of the Governors' meeting of June 15, 1971, contain a curious item in relation to this. They record that:

The Chairman [this was Denis Forman, who had just replaced Sir William Coldstream] said that he believed the Governors were committed to members of the Institute, the Staff Association and indeed to the Minister to produce a document outlining BFI policy as a result of the much publicised Policy Review Committee set up last autumn. The obligation he felt should now be extended to the full Board who should give their consideration to a document which the Directors should be asked to prepare in consultation with himself. The aim of such a document should be to express what was the Institute's role in 1971, with emphasis on positive areas of policy rather than an elaboration of the problem areas which had occupied much of the Review Committee's time. So the policy document will have little to do with what the Review

Committee spent most of its time discussing and will be the work of two people, one of whom was excluded from most of the discussions and the other of whom took no part in them.

The draft statement that has been produced as a result of this confirms what might have been expected of such a document. It is an evasion of all the serious issues that face the Institute in favour of bland reassurances and glib clichés.

The Education Department and the British Film Institute

The general crisis of the Institute put the Education Department in a frustrating position. Throughout the 1960s a steady growth in film education work occurred. The increasing demand on the services the Department could offer proved the correctness of the decision to improve and systematise those services. The concept of sustaining a film culture seemed a more and more useful one as the film culture of this country showed some vitality; new distribution and exhibition outlets like the New Cinema Club, the Other Cinema, the Electric Cinema Club; new film magazines like *Monogram* (originally *The Brighton Film Review*), *Cinema* and *Afterimage*; new series of books on the cinema; new film-making set-ups like the London Film-makers' Co-op, Cinema Action and Kestrel films, as well as many other independent initiatives. In such a context it seemed that the Institute could play a valuable role.

But the possibility of playing any role at all was destroyed by the crisis the Institute was undergoing. An organisation that was so chaotically run and so bereft of ideas of any kind was unlikely to be able to do anything useful towards sustaining a film culture.

Through a mixed policy of openly made criticism and positive initiatives the Education Department did what it could to involve the Institute in the problems of the general film culture. But the criticisms were ignored and, even worse, the positive initiatives frustrated. For example, in order to deal more adequately with the large number of requests the Institute receives for films to be viewed, the Department produced a scheme for dealing systematically with these requests in place of the *ad hoc*, inconsistent way they were being dealt with. The scheme was agreed in principle by the Executive subject to a costing of it being made. All Heads of Departments were asked to make an estimate of how the scheme would affect them and what demands they were likely to make on it. Three months later only one Head of Department, the Education Officer, had done this. The scheme was again pressed by the Department, and the Executive discussed it in principle once again (though there was no need to do this) and agreed to it subject to a costing being made. This time a costing was worked out by an officer of the Accounts Department and the Education Department. A sum of money (£1,500) was then put into the Institute's budget. However, the Director, who was being pressed by the Governors to consult them more often, decided that this was one of the matters

26. he should consult them about. The Governors decided that this was one of the matters the Education Committee should look into. The committee never found the time to do so. The ludicrous situation now exists by which £1,500 is allocated in the Institute's budget for a scheme that exists only in limbo.

Events like these forced the Department to become more and more critical of the Management. When it became difficult to ignore the criticisms, the Management counter-attacked. The Governors' committee on the Institute's educational services presented a very good opportunity to make such a counter-attack. The Director, accepting no responsibility himself for the Department, presented its activities in as unfavourable a light as possible to the committee. Its servicing activities were played down or distorted. The concept of creating a film culture was presented as the attempt to impose one particular view on film education and criticism. The efforts of individual members of staff were presented as the following of personal interests at the expense of the general ones the Institute should be concerned with.

This account of the Department's activities echoed Governors' predominant prejudices about the Institute: a deep-rooted anti-intellectualism; a fear of the Institute seeming to show a bias in its views which was so strong that they would prefer the Institute to be passive rather than active; a narrow concept of the Institute's servicing role which saw it principally as the doling out of money and could not conceive that encouraging serious discussion was also a useful service; and a cartoon view of the world which did not allow the possibility of people being both interested in ideas and conscientious about their servicing responsibilities. When these prejudices were combined with an unwillingness to spend time or energy seriously looking into the Department's work, then a hostile response to that work was guaranteed.

An atmosphere of shabby politics and unchecked prejudice was not the happiest one to exist in. It was clear that important social and cultural issues were at stake: what is the function of arts organisations like the Film Institute; what is the relationship between policy and administration; how can public control over bodies like the Institute be properly exercised? It was also clear that the constraints of working within the Institute made it extremely difficult to consider them properly.

Just after the Governors produced their report the prices of Distribution Library film materials were increased in the irresponsible and arbitrary fashion described in the appendix to this essay. This seemed like the grotesque culmination of the Institute's chaos. In face of it, how could one harbour thoughts of developing film education? The idea of sustaining a film culture seemed like a mad fancy. There didn't seem to be much of the future for the Education Department or anybody who was seriously interested in the cinema inside the British Film Institute. . . .

To: Stanley Reed

From: Paddy Whannel
Alan Lovell
July 15, 1971

We have already protested about the increase in the hire charges of film materials held by the Distribution Library and the way in which these increases were decided on. The implementation of these increases is causing such confusion that staff at Lower Marsh are unable to answer queries. They are passing some of these queries through to us but we in turn are unable to answer them. At the same time we are receiving complaints from educational users who naturally assume we were party to the decisions taken. Under the circumstances we feel we must again make a formal protest and summarise our own case for the record.

The process by which the increases were decided on

1. The first mention of increased prices for Distribution Library material and the abolition of discounts was made at a meeting of the Executive on January 28. There seems to have been considerable discussion and a good deal of opposition to John Huntley's proposals. The last sentence of the Minute of the discussion reads: 'It was clear from the discussion that there was no agreement on the policy issue raised and Mr Huntley withdrew his proposals.'
2. Nevertheless these same proposals appeared in the paper on the 1971/72 budget prepared by the Secretary for the Governors' Finance Committee meeting and dated February 16, 1971. The abolition of the 25 per cent discount is specified but the exact increases on film hire are not specified.
3. At no point was the Education Department informed of these increases although it is vitally involved at two points. First it negotiates for any new extracts that go into the Distribution Library. These negotiations are always delicate since the trade is suspicious that we are exploiting material that they make available to us on very reasonable terms. Second, the Distribution Library is a crucial source of supply of film materials for educationists. On the basis of the Executive discussion of January 28 it was assumed that the proposals for increased

prices had been abandoned – though a careful reading of the Finance Committee document might have revealed that the proposals had, in fact, been reinstated. The first direct indication of the increased prices we received was when Philip Strick in the course of a meeting on another subject with Colin McArthur mentioned them. A few days later Jim Hillier picked up a reference to the increases in a Press Release.

4. The matter was then raised at the Executive on April 29. It was agreed that there should be discussions between the departments concerned before the increases were implemented. Before he left Philip Strick only had time to talk to Jim Hillier about the Humanities Curriculum Project material. He agreed that this material was a special case and that Jim Hillier should suggest increases for it. At the Executive meeting on Thursday, May 6, it was agreed that a meeting should be convened by Mr Saunders with representatives of the Distribution Library and the Education Department to discuss the situation with particular reference to the Humanities Curriculum Project material but covering all extract material.
5. On May 14 a meeting took place which was attended by Vernon Saunders, Gerry O'Halloran, Jim Hillier and Alan Lovell. The extract situation was discussed. All present agreed that the existing proposals for increasing prices were misconceived and that new proposals should be put forward. It was agreed that Gerry O'Halloran should look at the Distribution Library figures with a view to making new proposals and that Jim Hillier would get figures about increases in teachers' budgets so that a realistic picture of the effects of any increases could be got. Jim Hillier, Alan Lovell and Gerry O'Halloran thought another meeting was to take place to consider these figures. Vernon Saunders says he does not remember agreeing to such a meeting. However, it is hard to see how the group could come to any conclusion unless it met again. In fact, since it did not meet Jim Hillier has had no chance to present the figures he collected about teachers' film hire budgets. This means that since at no point has any other attempt been made to assess the effects of the proposed increases, all estimates of the increased revenue to be got by the move are guesswork.
6. On Thursday, May 24, a meeting of the Executive (at which no member of the Education Department was present since Mr Whannel was ill) decided that the proposed increases should stand as they were decided by Governors but that there should be a delay in implementing the abolition of education discount until December 1971. We heard of this decision indirectly and protested to Mr Saunders about it and abortive nature of the meeting on the previous Friday. Alan Lovell agreed with Mr Saunders that since the Humanities Curriculum Project material was a special area and since no decision had been reached about

this at the Executive, Jim Hillier should settle the price increases for this material with Gerry O'Halloran. Alan Lovell subsequently sent Mr Saunders a memo confirming this and asking if any other meeting should take place that involved the Humanities Curriculum Project material Jim Hillier should be informed.

7. We thought that at this point the matter was decided. However, some weeks later Alan Lovell was extremely surprised to be shown a memo from Mr Saunders which said that the matter had been discussed by the Finance Committee and that the Committee had supported the Executive's decision to postpone the abolition of educational discount. They had also decided that the increases originally decided on should be applied to the Humanities Curriculum Project material. Neither Alan Lovell (as the person responsible in the Education Department) nor Jim Hillier (as the person responsible for Humanities Curriculum Project material) were informed of this development. At the very lowest level, in the interests of 'good communications' we should have thought that we should have been informed. Even more important, Alan Lovell had made a specific request to Mr Saunders that Jim Hillier be informed of any meeting concerning the HCP material and this request was ignored. It is also clear from the conversation Alan Lovell subsequently had with Mr Saunders and from the Finance Committee Minute that a crucial part of the case we had made against the price increases (that concerning the effect of the increases on our relationship with sympathetic members of the film trade) had not been put to the Finance Committee and that new arguments about the HCP material (concerning the contribution the Institute had made to the Project) were introduced. In fact the case put to the Finance Committee by the Institute's officers, which Mr Saunders claims was done as a result of the force of Alan Lovell's representations to him, seems more like special pleading for the maintenance of their own decision.

General implications

We have dealt so far with the process by which the price increases were decided on. There can be no doubt that this process was a chaotic and irresponsible one. But it also seems important to make explicit certain general points. They are:

1. Although great stress was put on the fact that the increase in prices was a decision by Governors, it is clear that at crucial points Governors were misled or not properly informed. They were misled into thinking that the trade was increasing its prices on film extracts and that therefore it was reasonable for the Institute to increase its prices. In fact the trade was asking for increased royalties from the Institute. The Institute was resisting these increases on the ground that the market would

not bear them. (If the trade had been successful in their demands, £3 would have had to be added to the existing charge for any extract.)

Governors were not informed of the way this situation developed. The KRS was persuaded [after long and delicate negotiations] that their demands were unrealistic. Although Vernon Saunders and all members of the Executive know of this situation, *the Governors' Finance Committee were never told about it*. Yet it was an important consideration in assessing the likely effects of the increases.

2. It was always argued that the price increases were a decision by Governors and therefore could not be changed. In the Governors' Finance Committee Minute referring to the increases no precise indication of the increases was given. The only indication given is: 'These [the old prices] would be replaced by differential charges related to type and quality of film and varying up to 150 per cent in the case of study extracts. . . .' One would assume from this that increases on material other than study extracts would not exceed 150 per cent. Extracts are presumably referred to as the category that would bear the steepest increases. *In fact, increases on other material were as much as 300 per cent*. From this it seems that a general statement of intent which was approved by the Governors' Finance Committee was taken as a *carte blanche* for prices to be raised in a quite arbitrary fashion.
3. No consideration was given to the effect of these price increases on film education courses. The description of the process by which the increases were decided on makes it clear that the Education Department was not consulted about this until the increases had to all intents and purposes been implemented. *It is the Department's considered view that the scale of the increases will set such courses back enormously since teachers will simply not be able to afford to use crucial film materials*. All the evidence we have gathered about teachers' budgets for film hire suggests this. If this is the case, increases will not lead to the extra revenue calculated. They could even lead to decreased revenue and force teachers to abandon courses, as some have said they will have to do.

We want to make it clear that we are not arguing against any increases. Some increase was probably inevitable. What we are arguing is that the scale of the increases are such that they are likely to defeat their purpose of increasing revenue as well as setting back film education.

4. Irrespective of the nature of the increases, the way they were to be implemented was ill-considered. The first announcement of them was made in the NFT booklet (a somewhat unorthodox channel) in May. The increases were to have effect from June. The timing was such as to create the maximum difficulty for

teachers. Most teachers' budgets are fixed in April, so that they cannot even argue for increased budgets until next April. If the announcement had been made in February or March they would have been able to argue for increased budgets. If it had been postponed until the end of the year the effect on their courses would not have been so severe and they would have been prepared to argue for increases next year.

Such public announcements as were made only referred generally to increased prices. No specific information was given. Since every item in the Library was to be priced individually it would have been extremely cumbersome to provide detailed information. So in theory a teacher (or any hirer) has to enquire about every item they propose to book. It is hard to imagine a more inconvenient way from everybody's point of view of doing things. Belatedly it was decided to produce a leaflet listing all the new prices.

5. The Schools Council donated over £6,000 worth of Humanities Curriculum Project material to the Library on the understanding that the Institute felt a special responsibility for making film materials easily and cheaply available to teachers. No consideration was given to the effect of the increases on this understanding, though one possible effect might have been a serious disruption of Project work. When Jim Hillier raised the question of the Project material, Philip Strick agreed that it was a special case and that Jim should make suggestions on behalf of the Project for increases that he felt would not seriously affect the use of the film materials. Vernon Saunders later agreed to a similar procedure. Yet the question of the Curriculum material was raised with the Finance Committee without any reference to Jim Hillier and in the context of an argument that had never been raised. This argument – that the Institute had made a contribution to the Project in the form of office space and services – was in fact a spurious one because even when this contribution is taken into account the Institute is handsomely in debt to the Project.
6. The increases were justified in relation to the Institute's educational responsibilities on the ground that the Institute should not subsidise education twice. Leaving aside the dubious nature of this argument, the question raised is whether education is not, in fact, being asked to subsidise the inefficiency of the Library. There are many signs that the Library is inefficiently run: it requires a much longer booking period than any other library; it will not accept telephone bookings like other libraries; the financial accounts it produces are open to question; and a general atmosphere of chaos surrounds its everyday workings. Alan Lovell asked Mr-Saunders if the particular operations of the Library had been costed and if, in particular, the service to outside distributors had been costed since he had heard

it expressed that we were subsidising these distributors. Mr Saunders said that it had not been costed in this way.

It seems to us on a careful examination of the situation that the decision to increase the prices was arrived at in an irresponsible way; that it was implemented carelessly and without forethought; and that no consideration was given to the important implications of the increases. The likely result is that the film trade and the Schools Council will be alienated, film education set back, the maximum ill-will for the Institute created, and the object of the exercise not achieved. If such disastrous results are to be avoided, the following action seems necessary:

- (a) The proposed price increases on all Library material are modified to the level of increases proposed by Jim Hillier for HCP material. (There should be no problem in doing this as we have just been informed that the HCP material will now be costed on the basis of Jim Hillier's proposals and not on the basis of the original proposals.)
- (b) A thorough costing of the different aspects of the Library's operation to be carried out by the Accounts Department. A new and realistic price structure for all material to be worked out taking into account the findings of this costing.
- (c) The representatives of the Distribution Library to consult with the Education Department and teachers' organisations like SEFT and ALE to work out a scheme by which any new increases can be implemented with the least possible disruption of educational activities.

● *From Paddy Whannel to the Chairman of the Society for Education in Film and Television*

August 31, 1971

Jim Cook,
Chairman,
SEFT.

Dear Jim,

Although I am addressing this letter to you personally I am making copies available to the members of the SEFT Committee, the Board of *Screen* and some others active in the film education movement.

You will know that six of us (myself, Alan Lovell, Eileen Brock, Jim Pines, Jenny Norman and Gail Naughton) have resigned from the Institute. I enclose a copy of a statement we issued.*

I regret that SEFT is also under fire. We have protested about the underhand way this was handled and about the shabby treatment accorded the SEFT officers, Sam Rohdie and Diana Matias, whose very jobs are under threat.

I am sure you will agree with me that it is the duty of all of us in the film education movement to give them unqualified support.

My main purpose in writing is to deal with two issues about which there seems some confusion and misunderstanding. These are:

- (a) Services to the practising teacher.
- (b) The role of intellectual work in film study.

It is not possible to judge these questions without understanding the agreement worked out between the Society and the BFI Education Department about their respective functions. This agreement was drawn up by Terry Bolas and myself and confirmed by the SEFT Committee and the Director of the BFI. The basis of the agreement was that the BFI was the obvious body to provide services (advisory service, film materials, lecture services and so on) and that the Society was best defined as the independent professional body having these functions:

- (a) Publication of *Screen*.
- (b) An Annual Conference.

* See p 1.

- (c) A Summer School specifically designed for teachers and having a practical bias.
- (d) Such regional events as could be sustained in the existing organisation.

As part of the agreement it was accepted that the Secretary of the Society as well as being the Editor of *Screen* would also contribute to the Advisory Service on the same basis as did other members of the Education Department. The Advisory Service was in that sense conceived of as a joint operation of the Society and the Department, giving information about both bodies and help and advice to all requesting it.

The notion has been put about recently that we (the Society and the Department) have neglected services to the practising teacher. It is difficult to locate the origins of this. It appears by implication in the Report of the BFI Governors' Review Committee on Educational Services. It seems to have been in the mind of the Director of the BFI. I was disturbed to see it appear in a letter circulated recently suggesting a rival organisation to SEFT.

Whatever the source, I can tell you nothing has aroused greater anger among my colleagues. If we are to be remembered by anything I think it should be by the quality of the services we provided. Our ideal was never to turn anyone away without giving every assistance possible. I think rarely did we fall below that standard. I am proud of our achievement in this field and I am proud to have worked with the people (both of the Department and the Society) who made it possible through their dedication – people like Jim Kitses, Victor Perkins, Terry Bolas, Jim Hillier and many others.

This is not to say we were satisfied. Latterly we were under great pressure. Jim Hillier with the help of the others was handling some 1,000 letters a year plus about 200 visitors and endless telephone calls. But our plea for an additional teacher adviser was rejected by the BFI management year after year. The charge that we neglected services therefore comes ill from those people, those same people who have so recently revealed their disregard for the needs of teachers in the decision to raise BFI Film Library charges.

It has also been put about that the officers of the Department and the Society have indulged their intellectual interests and inhabit a rarefied atmosphere (*Kine Weekly*, quoting the Director of the BFI).

This charge has been connected with the supposed neglect of services (as if there was some simple opposition between the two or as if services could be provided without thought) and concentrated on *Screen*, torn out of the context of the other work of the Society and the Department.

The intellectual work we have done has three aspects:

- (1) Seminars. Done in our own time in the evening and involving people from other disciplines like sociology.
- (2) The Department's contributions to the Cinema One series

which have included such books as Peter Wollen's *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*, Jim Kitses' *Horizons West* and Robin Wood's *Howard Hawks*.

(3) *Screen*.

The composition of the *Screen* Board and its general policy was agreed by the SEFT Committee after considerable discussion. The basic concept of *Screen* was that it should be:

- (a) A journal of Film Education.
- (b) That it should pursue the study of film and education and the relationships between the two at a fundamental level.
- (c) It would differ from the previous journal in that it would not be a journal of *film criticism* carrying some accounts of film teaching work and problems in isolation.
- (d) Straightforward accounts of courses, information lists, etc, could, it was felt, more readily be provided through the Advisory Service duplicated documents.
- (e) *Screen* should carry an educational notes section drawing attention to new documents, new extracts, courses, conferences, etc.

The thinking behind this policy was as follows:

- (a) Services are crucial and should be maintained and improved.
- (b) At the same time film education is at a point where it must develop a discipline at a depth somewhat comparable to other subjects.
- (c) Only out of such a study in depth can new methods and approaches be developed at the classroom level.
- (d) Failure to engage in such a study will mean that film education will remain at its present level and therefore stagnate.

I believe this policy to be correct. There can of course be plenty of argument about how it is applied. I myself think that the material in the journal needs to be selected with more thought to its educational relevance (this does not mean that it can or should have *immediate* classroom relevance), that more editorial comment is needed to explain this relevance, and that the Educational Notes should be expanded to make sure that all teachers are aware of the practical services available. Sam Rohdie, I believe, has the thought that the Notes might become a separate newsletter. Others will have different ideas and it is important that they get a hearing. One thing I would wish to say however is that Sam and Diana who have so far produced two issues of *Screen* must get a fair chance to prove themselves. They have been plunged into a difficult situation, linked to a Department semi-demoralised and within a few months finding their own jobs threatened.

But the real situation is that the Education Department has been told it must no longer contribute to Cinema One books, must stop its seminars and cease all intellectual work, while the Society has been told that its grant will be cut to a point where it will be unable to produce a journal or pay its officers. This has been done

36 in the name of giving practical help to teachers by those who have shown by their actions that they care or know little of what the practical problems of teachers are.

I trust that on this issue those in the Society and in the film education movement will have no doubt where they stand.

Let us by all means continue to argue policy and how it is applied, but let us not divide ourselves in the interests of political manoeuvring.

This particular moment for film education while one of crisis is also one of great promise. More and more people are turning to film teaching. For the first time in my experience the SEFT Committee consists of people actively engaged in film teaching. Among younger people film education is taken seriously and there is now the possibility of a serious dialogue between the younger filmmakers, critics and film teachers. This is reflected in the composition of the BFI Members' Action Committee and in some student journals.

It would therefore be tragic if at this time teachers of all people found themselves enlisted in a philistine crusade against ideas.

Most of what I have said is already known to you but I thought it useful to put it on record for those less familiar with the facts.

Yours sincerely,

Paddy Whannel

● *Letter of resignation from Alan Lovell*

July 9, 1971

Paddy Whannel,
Education Officer,
BFI Education Department.

Dear Paddy,

I've already told you informally I am resigning from the Institute – this note can be taken as my formal notice of resignation. After ten years of close involvement with the work of the Education Department and the Institute as a whole, the decision to resign hasn't been an easy one to take. As you know, my reasons are partly personal – I feel it's time for a change. But partly the reasons are public ones to do with what has been happening in the Institute in the past few years. My view of what has been happening is adequately summed up in the letter that was sent to Governors by members of staff last June so I don't need to go over that ground again. But what has happened since then suggests that that letter had no effect.

1. One of the strongest motives for staff sending their letter was a feeling that the Publications Department had been unfairly treated by Governors and that decisions about *Sight and Sound* and the *Monthly Film Bulletin* had been reached without proper consideration. Now that situation has been repeated with the

Education Department. The Governors' Committee, in my view, made important decisions about the Department's work and the Institute's general educational policy in a hasty and ill-informed way. I feel particularly bitterly that the servicing work of this Department which I regard as its solidest achievement should have been so played down and distorted.

The same lack of consideration has been shown to SEFT and *Screen*. A decision about *Screen* which may effectively deprive the Editor and his Assistant of their jobs was made in a hole-and-corner way by the Publications Committee without the Editor even being informed that the journal and his future was under consideration.

2. One of the strongest points made in the staff letter was about the Director's failure to defend departments that were being criticised. In all the discussions that arose out of the original letter the Director has been unequivocal that he alone is responsible to the Governors for the workings of the Institute. Yet in our own case, like that of the Publications Department, he has not accepted that responsibility if I understand properly what this responsibility entails. I take it that it involves the Director is seeing that all departments work along lines that are acceptable to him and which he can defend to Governors. Yet in the case of the Education Department, despite having given assurances on a number of occasions that he supported our policy, he not only did not defend the Department to Governors but criticised it. I regard this failure as particularly important because the policy of the Department has developed in certain new directions that needed to be sympathetically presented to Governors if they were to understand and consider them properly.
3. Another important issue raised in the staff letter was the inefficient way the Institute operated. This inefficiency could hardly have been more dramatically demonstrated than by the way the decision to increase Distribution Library prices was arrived at and implemented. A decision which will have serious consequences for film education at all levels was taken on the basis of scanty and misleading information, without proper consultation with the departments involved; this decision was then implemented carelessly with a complete disregard for the practicalities of the situation. The net result is likely to be that film education will be seriously set back, little extra revenue will be gained and the Institute's general reputation harmed. And the whole basis of the operation seems to be to shore up an inefficient Library which has been neglected and which only functions at all because of the efforts of the staff of the Library in overcoming the neglect.

All of this points to a serious reconsideration of the structure and functioning of the Institute at all levels from Governors to

staff. I have not touched on the question of the policies of the Institute, how far it should simply be an administrative body, how far it should take initiatives of its own, whether it needs to professionalise itself in terms of knowledge and understanding of the area it has to deal with, what its relation to television should be, how it should orient itself to film-making and film-makers. But these obviously need serious thought.

There are some signs that a reconsideration of the Institute's work is coming about. At least I take the willingness of the new Chairman to talk freely to staff as an encouraging sign. But I don't believe any one man can solve the situation which seems to me to need open public discussion and a willingness to learn from past mistakes. I'd like to take part in such public discussion, and one of the reasons for resigning is to be free to do so in a way that was not possible while I was a member of staff.

I would like the Director and the Chairman to see copies of this letter. I should also like Professor Briggs to see a copy not so much in his capacity as Chairman of the Education Committee as in his capacity as Vice-Chancellor of Sussex University. The Department as a whole has made special efforts to develop the study of film at Sussex and I have been particularly involved in these (I taught a course for four years in the School of Educational Studies and I have done what I can to encourage the magazine produced by Sussex students, *The Brighton Film Review*). The lack of consideration the Committee of which he was Chairman showed for our work seems a poor reward for such efforts.

Yours sincerely,

Alan Lovell
Deputy Education Officer

● *From Paddy Whannel to the Chairman of the British Film Institute*

September 4, 1971

Denis Forman,
Chairman,
British Film Institute,

Dear Denis Forman,

You will know from the Director that I have resigned from the Institute. You will also have had a copy of the statement I signed along with my five colleagues who also resigned. The decision was a difficult one for all of us. In my own case it was especially painful as I have worked at the Institute for fourteen years, helping to build up its educational work. I feel therefore that I might usefully make some further observations, drawing upon this experience which has been the major part of my working life. I do so of course in the full knowledge that you have had no responsibility for Institute policy throughout this period.

An accumulation of things over a period of years led to the conviction that I could no longer play a creative role within the Institute as it at present exists. These can be summarised briefly:

1. The failure of management to accept responsibility for departmental policies and to support staff.
2. The failure of Governors to realise that they were inadequately informed or to act upon such information as they had.
3. The substitution of backroom wheeling and dealing for the formal procedures of decision-making.
4. Managerial inefficiency infecting almost every aspect of the Institute's work.
5. Hostility to ideas and to intellectual work.
6. Lack of concern with basic services and with the needs of users, especially educational users.
7. Basic structural faults both in the Institute's internal organisation and in its relationship to its Governing Body and to members.
8. Lack of any clear definition of the Institute's social and cultural role.

Most of these issues have been referred to in our joint statement and illustrated by examples. Some, especially (7) and (8), require additional comment.

The Institute is an extremely inefficient organisation. In the case of the Education Department I would guess that this inefficiency probably reduced our working capacity by at least 25 per cent. The minutes of the Senior Executive Committee are a sad record of decisions taken and ignored (each department to produce an annual report, departments to report twice a year to Governors), decisions acted upon in such a lackadaisical manner as to be meaningless (six years to produce an Institute brochure, *four* years for the Short Films Committee to report), decisions taken and reversed elsewhere (Distribution hire charges) and decisions taken without thought of consequences (abolition of educational discount, which makes BFI membership virtually meaningless for most people outside of London). There has been much speculation as to why our Film Library loses so much money, but when it can go for some years without even having a catalogue there is really no mystery.

It is tempting to attach blame to particular individuals for this but my view is that the root cause can be traced to certain structural flaws in the organisation and to a lack of rigour in defining the Institute's aims and purposes.

As I see it, there are four aspects to the problem of structure:

1. *Departmental structure*

As the Institute has grown certain sections have expanded to the point where they should become separate departments with heads responsible to the Director. The present Film Services section makes no sense, and clearly the Distribution Library and CBA, the Production Board and the Regional Theatres

(grouped with the NFT) should become separate departments. There is also a case for separating the Archive's informational side from its preservation wing. A related problem is that at present the Institute has, in effect, no Deputy Director. The curator explicitly refuses responsibility here and is exclusively concerned with the Archive. This has a distorting effect on all discussion and policy-making.

2. *Decision-making procedures*

Decision-making within the Institute has become entirely authoritarian and arbitrary. Policy decisions have been made by the Director and the Chairman in occasional collaboration with a small and changing group of Governors. The Senior Executive Committee is reduced to dealing with administrative trivia. This must be changed. It should become an absolute rule that all major decisions, especially those concerning finance, are taken within the Senior Executive and properly recorded. This Committee, acting collectively under the chairmanship of the Director, should have responsibility for shaping the details of policy and of proposing new policies to the Governors. It should be ensured at all times that all Departments of the Institute are represented on the Executive and that all members have equal access to information.

3. *The Board of Governors*

The Board should represent the public interest, ensuring that policies proposed are within the terms of reference and that the Institute is administering its affairs properly. At present it fails to do this. Although we are both members of the Senior Executive, neither Penelope Houston nor I were aware that the Institute had decided to take on two fully financed theatres at Newcastle and Brighton until some time after the decision. A careful inspection of Governors' minutes gives no indication that the Governors as a whole knew what they were deciding. Governors have also accepted papers from Film Services containing errors of monumental proportions, and passed the recent Film Library price increases without regard to their consequences. This happens because Governors are out of touch with staff and are unrepresentative of users. For example, there are no film educationists on the Board. If there were, the decision about prices would never have been passed.

To develop more effective Staff/Governors relationship some such scheme as that put forward by Dr Kerr should be adopted. Dr Kerr's original proposals were put to staff in a very pejorative way, but put differently I believe they would be acceptable to the great majority.

To make the Board more representative requires some system whereby a proportion of members are elected (a) by the staff, (b) by the members. The remainder being nominated by the Minister as at present.

4. *Members*

Traditionally members are ignored or, when they become active, regarded as a nuisance. The suggestion that membership should be abolished is irresponsible. The claim that the Institute is a national body representing the whole public is in effect a claim that it should be responsible to no one. In any case the proposal that Governors be elected by members and staff and nominated by the Minister on the basis of one-third each is surely a fair balance. The proposal to give members voting rights should only be the first step in strengthening membership. The members, if taken seriously, should be the Institute's allies in times of crisis and its permanent source of new ideas. As it is, the Institute is sadly lacking in ideas and woefully out of touch with the younger critics, film-makers and film teachers. This is something that cannot be rectified by the odd private lunch with supposed representative figures.

In this context the attitude of management and Governors to the BFI Action Committee is very foolish. The recent statement issued by the Committee is far in advance in its thinking of anything produced elsewhere and must be taken seriously.

The proposals for structural change I have made can be read as an attempt to democratise the Institute. But they can also be read as an attempt to impose a structure on it, to make it operate with efficiency. It is sometimes said that the Institute is bureaucratic. If only it were! What it lacks is precisely a bureaucratic structure.

Behind these questions of structure lie the larger questions of policy. That the Institute has no clear conception of its role is best illustrated by reference to its theatres. The NFT has no policy. The only attempt to set out on paper a policy of programme planning was made by my colleague Alan Lovell when he applied for the post of Programme Planning Officer, for which he was rejected. Discussion is conducted at the level of banalities and fluctuates around such crude notions as a 'commercial policy' and an 'art policy' as if there was some simple conflict between the two. The only conclusion that ever emerges is that the theatre must have an ever-enlarged subsidy. The situation of the regions is worse. What is the overall conception? What determines their present location? Are they replicas of the NFT? Are they traditional art houses? Are they an emerging Third Circuit? All of these questions are unanswered and will remain so until we can say what the Institute is for.

Current thinking within the Governors seems to suggest the Arts Council as a model for the BFI. This sees the BFI as a body providing some basic services but acting primarily as a grant-giving organisation. One can see attractions in this, especially in the present climate, but I believe there are profound objections to it:

1. It would condemn the Institute to a passive role reflecting the *status quo*.
2. It takes no account of the primitive state of film culture. This

is illustrated by the argument that intellectual work should be done by the universities and not by the Institute. Of course the Institute should do all it can, including giving grants of money, to establish film departments in the universities, but even if one or two departments were established with a few lecturing posts over the next five years this would be a drop in the ocean, and in no way could be seen as a pretext for the Institute, as a central repository of films and information, to contract out of intellectual work.

The Arts Council model carries an implied comparison with film and the other arts such as literature which is totally unreal when one thinks of the hundreds of years it took to establish a literary culture and how it is sustained by thousands of teaching and other posts.

3. It would tend to a neglect of education by suggesting that somehow services could be provided which were not backed up by thinking about film education.
4. Most fundamental of all, the Arts Council model is un-historical. It has no conception of the relationship of intellectual or social movements to the production and consumption of art. A simple one-to-one relationship is presumed. The viewer magically endowed with 'good taste' requires a (subsidised) supply of artistic films. The film-maker mysteriously endowed with talent requires his grant to produce his personal films. Each operates in isolation, out of place, out of time. The history of the cinema teaches differently. The 'great films' have all emerged out of a particular context and out of intellectual, social and artistic movements, out of an emerging culture of the cinema. The Institute can best serve the film-maker and his public by nourishing this culture rather than by doling out subsidies for personal experiments conducted in a vacuum.

For this reason I would set against the Arts Council model the notion of the Institute as an agency of Film Culture.

Agency implies action, intervention in a changing process, rather than the passive response to a static situation. Film Culture implies breadth. It embraces not only film as art, but film as entertainment, film as communication and film as business. It implies a variety of approaches to film study of which criticism is only one and which includes film history, film sociology and film theory. Both together emphasise the importance of ideas allied to action.

Some implications for the Institute would be:

1. The Archive would put as much emphasis on viewing and study as upon preservation. It would model itself more on the Tate Gallery than on the British Museum. The stress would be on its contribution to film culture now rather than in some ever-distant future.
2. The NFT (and key Regional Theatres) would not be seen as an

art house but as a centre of film culture in which the showing of films was part of an integrated programme of seminars, debates, discussions, exhibitions, etc.

3. Publications: *Screen* would be supported as a unique academic and theoretical journal of film education. *Sight and Sound* would be converted to a genuinely popular journal of film study mediating between advanced work and the general audience and not confining itself to criticism.
4. Departments would collaborate on the basis of the common aim of promoting a film culture and on particular projects like the model site scheme.
5. As part of that collaboration it would be recognised that intellectual work must inform every aspect of the Institute's work.

Point (5) is probably the crunch. An anti-intellectual atmosphere does prevail at the Institute. Hostility to ideas extends in a variety of ways right throughout the film establishment, sadly including people like Lindsay Anderson who I thought might have responded differently. Nothing has been more revealing, or more depressing, than the hostility engendered by *Screen* in contrast, for example, to the uncritical acceptance of *Film*, the journal of the Federation of Film Societies. In the case of the Education Department our services which engaged the great bulk of our time and energies have been ignored (indeed, hampered), while our modest and largely spare-time attempts to give film study a bit more depth have brought upon us the strange charge that we aim to impose a monolithic critical line. Strange, because by putting all BFI publications under one editor, and under one committee, a monolithic structure has indeed been created. It is one, of course, that reflects critical orthodoxy.

It has often been said that this hostility to ideas and uneasiness about theory is something peculiarly English. But even this is changing. Peter Wollen's book *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* was either ignored when it was first published or subjected to abuse. In fact it has had very wide sales, especially among younger people, and is likely to be one of the very few books, perhaps the only one, of the Cinema One series to require continual reprinting.

There would seem little likelihood that a project such as Wollen's would find acceptance in the present climate. If the recommendations of the Committee on Educational Services mean anything the Education Department series of seminars will have to be abandoned, as will the Summer School and the special seasons at the NFT.

Given the obvious need for such work, given that no other body is likely to meet this need, I really cannot make sense of such a policy, especially when the Institute itself so badly needs the inspiration of new ideas.

I am making copies of this letter available to a limited number of colleagues in the film movement.

Yours sincerely,

Paddy Whannel

A New Screenplay for the BFI

In the summer of 1970 a group of BFI members, among them independent film-makers, film critics and lecturers, together with a number of people actively involved in creating alternatives to the existing distribution/exhibition circuits, formed themselves into the BFI Members Action Committee with the intention of forcing a confrontation between the BFI's governing body* and its Director, Stanley Reed, and the growing number of members who were critical of its present policy.

With the rapid expansion of the BFI since 1965, there has been growing unrest about its lack of policy and its dependence on the demands of the market. In 1968 Maurice Hatton and a group of members attempted to bring about a change by sending an Open Letter to the Minister responsible for the Arts, Jennie Lee, but very little was achieved by such means. It was for this reason that the Action Committee decided that the only way to effectively influence policy was through the membership. They therefore decided to make use of the one right members had, that of putting forward a motion for the dismissal of the Governors at the Annual General Meeting in December.

The Action Committee issued a manifesto 'Why we want to dismiss the Governors' explaining its aims signed by the following: Ian Cameron, Steve Dwoskin, Simon Field, Roger Graef, Mark Forstater, Nick Garnham, Jon Haliday, Simon Hartog, Phil Hardy, Maurice Hatton, Claire Johnston, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, Victor Perkins, Peter Sainsbury, Nick Hart-Williams and Peter Wollen. The main demand was the election of Governors by the members and staff of the Institute.

The Annual General Meeting itself proved to be a fiasco, with no real confrontation taking place because of the lack of direction from the chair, though the meeting was attended by over 400 members, which had never happened before in the BFI's history. A postal vote

* The governing body of the BFI at that time consisted of fifteen Governors under the Chairmanship of Sir William Coldstream; they were: Paul Adorian, Edgar Anstey, Jocelyn Baines, Michael Balcon, Asa Briggs, Kevin Brownlow, Robert Camplin, James Christie, John Davis, Carl Foreman, Helen Forman, George Hoellering, David Kerr and Lord Lloyd of Hampstead.

was taken of the entire membership and the Action Committee's resolutions were heavily defeated, although nearly 500 members did vote for the dismissal of one or more Governors, suggesting a substantial body of discontent. In addition to this discontent among members there has been considerable unrest among the BFI staff over the last year over questions of policy and mismanagement. Since the Annual General Meeting the situation has been in abeyance.

Sir William Coldstream has been replaced as Chairman of the Board of Governors by Dennis Forman, a former BFI Director now at Granada TV. Rather than having an open enquiry into the role of the BFI which was suggested by two former Governors who resigned last year, Karel Reisz and Lindsay Anderson, the Governors decided to carry out their own enquiry or 'policy reviews' which have not as yet been made public, although an assurance to this effect was given to members at the Annual General Meeting.

In the meantime, without in any way prejudging the contents of the Governors' forthcoming report, the Action Committee has prepared its own report as a basis for discussion among members and people interested in the future of the British cinema.

The Future of the British Film Institute: A discussion paper prepared by the BFI Members Action Committee

The time has now come for a radical reappraisal of the role of the BFI; in fact, this has been acknowledged even within the BFI itself, and a Governors' Policy Review is being prepared which, we hope, will be published in due course. While we do not know its conclusions, we feel the time has come to produce a statement of policy on our own account.

The Institute's problems stem from a basic contradiction in its aims as set out in the Articles of Association. In the Articles, 'the Institute is established to encourage the development of the art of the film, to promote its use as a record of contemporary life and manners, to foster study and appreciation of it from these points of view, to foster study and appreciation of films for television and television programmes generally and to encourage the best use of television'. In pursuit of these aims it is permitted to 'apply, petition for, or promote any Act of Parliament, Royal Charter or other authority with a view to the attainment of the above objects'. However, it is only allowed to do this so long as it 'shall neither seek to control nor attempt to interfere with purely trade matters in the Film Industry'.

This is like asking the police to keep down crime provided they in no way inconvenience the criminals! Such interference is essential to the furtherance of the Institute's aims. At present, the Institute operates in production, distribution and exhibition. In all these areas it is, with pitiful finance, attempting to swim against the tide of an industry, while influential members of that industry dominate its Board of Governors. They are, quite understandably, hardly likely to recommend with any enthusiasm, effective legislation to change the present status quo. However, if the Government seriously wishes to support the stated aims of the Institute, this is what will be required.

The BFI's problems cannot be looked at in isolation from those of the whole industry. In examining the BFI's role, what we are in fact considering is the way in which the State supports the art of the film in its widest sense. At present, the State supports the film industry in the following ways:

1. **The British Film Fund (or Eady Money).** This is a fiscal device for supporting a home-based commercial industry at the expense of foreign films (in practice, American films) by means of a levy on the receipts of all films exhibited in this country. Under this scheme, the most successful British films receive the most money, so that, in effect, the rich get richer.

2. **The National Film Finance Corporation.**¹ This is a straight commercial banking operation, using capital provided by the State in an attempt to counteract the domination of British production by American capital, and so encourage the home-based industry. The corporation is required to make a profit, although it has failed consistently to do so. At present it neither supports a viable home-based commercial industry, nor does it support quality films by counteracting the distortion of the commercial system.

3. **The National Film School.** This is funded by a direct Treasury grant and by a percentage of the Eady Money. It is the main recipient of State aid for the training of young film-makers, and thus represents the State's main investment in the future of the British cinema.

4. **The British Film Institute.** The Institute's rapid expansion over recent years has led it to operate over too wide a field, thus operating in each specific area in a half-hearted and underfinanced manner. As well as fulfilling its archival and educational role, the Institute at present dabbles with State funds in production, through the production fund, and in distribution and exhibition through the NFT and the regional theatres. We believe that one cannot look at the BFI outside the context of the industry as a whole. We further believe that all the areas of State support listed above should be coordinated and expanded. Indeed, in our view, it is a sign of the BFI's failure that it has not pressed vigorously and publicly for the necessary Government action.

The Institute should resume the role for which it was originally intended. It should be a cultural body, financed out of public money, but responsible primarily to its members. As we shall suggest, the production fund, the distribution library and the chain of regional film theatres, together with some other ancillary activities, should be removed from the BFI and expanded to form a fully-fledged State sector within the industry. Administratively, this would be a simple operation, since all these divisions of the Institute are at present clearly defined and under the direction of one man. They would form the kernel of a new organization. The BFI would then be left free to concentrate on its true priorities, undeflected by commercial considerations. Indeed, it should be able to encourage independent comment on the industry. Its status should be similar to that of a museum

1. Now disbanded.

or university – though it would have no formal teaching functions. Its functions would be those of the present Archive, Education and Publications divisions of the Institute. The National Film Theatre would also continue to be an integral part of the Institute.

(a) The Archive

The main task of the Archive is the preservation of films. At the moment it is seriously under-financed, and thus, in effect, has to rely on the charity of the film companies. It cannot afford either to purchase prints in significant numbers or to make exhibition copies of the prints it already has. We believe it should receive a much larger grant in absolute terms and it should also have a bigger proportion of the Institute's funds than it does at present. The preservation of films for screening should be the core of the Institute's activities and this function must have priority over funds. As a counterpart to this, the Archive should cease to see itself, as it does at present, as a semi-autonomous body, separate from the rest of the Institute and acting in isolation. Moreover, since the Archive is the most vital part of the Institute, it must display this vitality, and see itself, not simply as a store-place, but as a centre for research, study and discussion. It must welcome every kind of student of film. Its policies over what kind of film to preserve should develop out of genuine critical discussion. The Archive should never refuse free copies of films offered to it; indeed, it should pursue a policy of obtaining as many free copies as possible. In the case of films which are not offered to the Archive, some kind of selection procedure is necessary, but the present system of selection committees should be dismantled. The selection of films to preserve is, at the same time, the selection of films which are allowed to be destroyed. The selection process is the *raison d'être* for the whole Institute and it must follow clear guidelines which have emerged from informed discussion, to which every member should be entitled to contribute. Selection should not be abstract, as though compiling lists was equivalent to obtaining films. It should take account of the realities of film acquisition and should set the acquisitions staff tasks which they can hope to fulfil. At the same time, the Archive must launch a persistent, vigorous struggle for full, statutory deposit, not simply through behind-the-scenes lobbying, but through the mobilization of membership. The freedom which film companies enjoy to destroy the films they own, without let or hindrance, is a scandal, and there must be no compunction about exposing it, however infuriated the industry may become.²

(b) The Education, Research and Publications Divisions

Preserving films should not be simply antiquarianism, while seeing films should not be simply passive consumption. A living film culture implies film research, study and discussion, and this should take place not only in the film departments of universities or art colleges

2. The recent destruction of prints of the 'non-commercial' films in MCA's 16mm library upon its closure – ie those films Columbia did not wish to buy is a case in point.

(such as they are), but within the Institute itself. This does not mean that the Institute should become a teaching body, awarding diplomas or degrees, but that it must provide facilities for study; a vastly expanded library, many more viewing booths, etc, and itself encourage discussion, both in connection with the showing of films at the National Film Theatre and through series of seminars. This side of the Education Department's activities must be expanded, and not contracted, as the Institute's present policy demands. In the same way, the Publications Department should work closely with the Education Department. It should not try to establish a monopoly in film publishing, but should provide facilities and/or funds for independent ventures. It should continue to publish catalogues, proceedings of seminars, etc, as well as books which would not otherwise find a publisher or do not directly compete commercially, as the Cinema One series does at present. *Sight and Sound* should be allowed to publish independently of the BFI, and any magazine published by the BFI in future should be the journal of the active membership, reflecting the research and study in which the BFI is engaged, enabling members to participate in the work of the Institute. It should have a clear editorial policy, and one which could be changed by members.

(c) The National Film Theatre

The National Film Theatre should be seen as an indispensable part of the Institute's museum function, and should therefore not be expected to make a profit. Indeed, part of its programming policy should consist precisely in showing films which cannot otherwise be seen, ie films which are not considered profitable to show by those who are in the industry to make money. The NFT must be closely linked both to the Archive and to the Education and Research Departments. While the chain of regional theatres should be frankly acknowledged as the embryo of a State circuit, as will be argued below, there should nevertheless still be a limited number of regional film theatres on the NFT model in key centres (Bristol, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow). Like the London NFT itself, these should be subsidized and not expected to show a profit. They should be combined with viewing facilities, discussion and seminar programmes, libraries, etc, so that, while they could not hope to match the facilities available in London to BFI members, they at least approximate to these. In this way, they would not simply be cinemas, but genuine film centres.

(d) Membership

While all BFI facilities should be open to the public, and in particular the NFT and the Library, there should be a category of membership which would carry with it some privileges (eg season tickets, priority on extraordinary occasions, the members' magazine and programme booklet) and also powers.

The majority of the Governors should be elected by members and staff – that is, by those who are most actively concerned with the

creation of a film culture in Britain. We do not believe that the appointment of Governors by the Minister, with the implication of Government supervision and influence over policy, is in the best interests of a cultural body. Moreover, members should have access to all Institute proceedings and the possibility of intervention at every level. It is important that members should be actively engaged in the work of the Institute on a day-to-day basis. In our view, part of the reason why the Institute at present lurches from crisis to crisis is that the Governors are almost all part-time, with no real experience of the workings of the BFI or dedication to its aims. They are respectable figures in public life, chosen to represent various established interests, for whom the BFI and its affairs, so important to members and staff, must be a very low priority compared with their multifarious other pursuits.

In conclusion, our recommendations for the restructuring of the BFI can be summed up in three points:

1. The BFI should be seen within the overall context of State intervention in the film industry. The State should intervene in a more decisive way in the industry and many of the BFI's present functions, production, distribution and exhibition, should be redistributed within a rationalized State sector.
2. The BFI should be a predominantly cultural body, centred around the Archive. It should be recognized as non-commercial and it should actively pursue and expand its educational functions, without becoming an academic body.
3. The members and staff of the BFI should elect the majority of the Governors. Members should play a full part in every aspect of the BFI's activities.

In the wider context, the ultimate aim should be the social ownership of the film and television industries under the joint control of audience and workers and their proper integration, undistorted by the profit motive, into the cultural life of the community. Within this perspective, the reforms we have outlined could be crucial. However, there are other short-term reforms which should also be sought.

1. Production. The aim should be to foster a coherent policy of development from student films to fully professional features or TV work. In this way, the present BFI production fund should be abolished and aid to debutante film-makers should be channelled through film schools. The present fund is too insignificant to act as anything but an esoteric conscience-salver. Eady Money should go to a reconstituted and more highly funded National Film Finance Corporation. This body should act as recommended in para 250 of the Monopoly Commission Report in a more selective manner to encourage new talent in film production, instead of using it entirely to reinforce the box-office success of British-produced films. In this respect the Swedish Film Institute could act as a model, where only 30 per cent of their revenue is used to support normal commercial production. The danger of such a scheme is the amount of arbitrary and artistic power vested in one body. Quite clearly, some way should be found to avoid this; for example, decentralized, self-

financing production units. A specific proportion of the available money should be set aside for the financing of first films by writers, actors, cameramen, etc, who have already bypassed the film school system.

Although the aim should be to support the cinema as a popular art in the truest sense of the term, in order to make the widest choice of films available to the widest audience and in order to support films of mainly national interest, direct subsidy must be part of the NFFC's function. Our present policy of subsidizing the arts is decisively class-based. It would be possible, for instance, to finance twenty-five features a year with the present subsidy to Covent Garden and with much wider public benefit.

2. Distribution. The present distribution department of the BFI should be expanded and set up as an independent, fully-fledged national distributor, handling not only student films and the products of the NFFCs, but also importing from abroad in competition with the existing distributors. Once again policy should be under the control of an elected board representing the unions and the audience.

3. Exhibition. The production and distribution scheme outlined above will be powerless without some guaranteed exhibition outlets. We propose that the BFI's present network of regional theatres should be used as a base for a viable Third Circuit. The aim of the circuit should be to integrate the showing of archival and new films, of foreign-language, British and American films. These cinemas should act as points of cultural focus, wherever possible linked to repertory theatres, arts labs, film workshops, etc. These cinemas should be open to all, but a form of membership similar to BFI associate membership should entitle one to a mailing list of programmes and voting rights.

These voting members would control the policy of the individual cinemas and of the circuit as a whole at a national level. The co-ordinating body at national level should also contain representatives from distribution and production, and the circuit as a whole would have to guarantee to take a certain number of films a year from the NFFC.

It is hoped that this statement will foster discussion within the film industry and among BFI members; we would therefore welcome any comments and criticism, which should be sent to:

BFI Members' Action Committee,
c/o November Books,
23/29 Emerald Street,
London WC2.

Jim Hillier

This article attempts to pose some questions about a very important educational project in film, important because it involves large sums of public money, cooperation between schools and local authorities, large numbers of pupils and the British Film Institute.

The Project began some two years ago when a local headmaster with an interest in film took the initiative in approaching the Tyneside Film Theatre about mounting shows of 'film classics' for his school, guaranteeing pupil audiences of 120. From this the idea snowballed and the Project as it is now came into being, using money from the Department of Education and Science, the Gulbenkian Foundation, local education authorities (including Newcastle, Gateshead, Northumberland, County Durham, Tynemouth and South Shields), and other local sources. The budget for the Project, for the three years 1970-73, is running at something over £6,000 per annum. In the first year the Project was supported entirely by outside money but each year the LEAs are required to find a greater proportion of the cost. After the third year there is no certainty of outside money and what will probably happen, if the work continues, is that as many programmes will be mounted as money can be found for. The Project sees itself as a pilot scheme for other regional film theatres and even for commercial cinema chains. The BFI has become involved in various ways without making any significant financial contribution: two members of the BFI's Regional Group sit on the Executive Committee of the Project and by its presence in the Tyneside Theatre, its sponsorship and the substantial claims it is making for the Project the BFI identifies itself quite closely with the experiment.

During 1970-71 programmes have been organised on History, Art Appreciation, Careers, English Literature set books, foreign literature set books, Geography, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, Religious Education, Music, Film Study, Science, Sports and Games, Physical Recreation. At least one auditorium, sometimes two, is in use every afternoon in the week during term time. In a typical term there might be sixty separate performances, involving about 100 schools, with an average of 200 pupils at each performance, with a total attendance over the term of perhaps 11,000-12,000.

There are some pretty obvious practical advantages to the scheme

as outlined. It makes economic sense to show films to large rather than to small numbers (and even for very large audiences it seems that it is very often cheaper to hire films on 35mm than on 16mm). Calling on schools over a large area means that there are audiences for films which might be of interest to only a handful of pupils in any single school. A well-equipped professional theatre offers higher technical standards of projection. It also means that films available only on 35mm can be shown. The contact with the BFI offers access to some material only available in Archives.

The Project programmes themselves may be broken up into a number of different kinds of conceptions of the use of film. Only one series of programmes – the CSE course in Film Study – is devoted to the study of film as film, as an art form in itself. Significantly perhaps, these are by far the least popular of all the programmes offered by the Project. We should perhaps add to the Film Study course most of the History programmes, which have collected very useful historical documentary and newsreel material, and even some feature film material, into some excellent programmes which are a good example of the use of film as historical record.

Many of the programmes feature film as really only a minor element and make the presence of a specialist speaker of paramount importance. Programmes on Careers, Science, Physical Education, Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, Conservation and so on tend to fall into this category. In these the Film Theatre is little more than a convenient venue for large groups to be addressed by experts or notables who probably would not come to each individual school. The films are mere frills and are in fact often ones which any school could get quite easily for itself, cheaply or at no expense. Despite the feeling that these tend to look like prestige occasions, this strategy seems acceptable but it is difficult to see that it has a lot to do with any valid educational use of *film*, not only as an art, but even as a medium. Sadly, too, this principle overlaps into some of the Religious Education programmes, where films and the issues they raise seem to be seen as less important than the dignitaries invited to introduce them. Even with set book films the quality or usefulness of the film seems to be seen as less important than the literary academic who will be called upon to introduce it.

Some other programmes – Careers in some cases, Geography, Physical Education, some History – consist of basically visual aid films. Here it is very difficult to argue in favour of showing such films in a film theatre since they are designed specifically for showing in the classroom to small groups at particular stages of instruction, not in artificially created programmes calculated to blunt the effect of individual items. This much is admitted by the Project organisers. Unfortunately, they continue to programme visual aid films.

A very large area of the Project's work is the set book film programme. The strategy here has been an extension of the already

widely accepted practice of showing the films made from books being studied by examination pupils at CSE, Ordinary level and Advanced level. These have been among the most popular programmes (though it is interesting to see audience figures plummet when something a bit odd comes up, like Welles's *Chimes at Midnight*).

Some other programmes, like Music and Art Appreciation, use film as a way of importing other arts. It is difficult to assess these programmes without knowing the films or the methods of teaching these subjects in the schools concerned. On the other hand it is difficult not to have very serious doubts about the way music is taught when the films include *La Boheme*, *Swan Lake*, *Madame Butterfly*, *The Great Mr Handel*, *The Red Shoes*, *Kismet*. In this area in particular one senses a rather unbendingly Reithian principle at work, giving the pupils what they ought to want, exposing them to great art (rather than to the cinema).

This leaves only those programmes which are on the classic lines of liberal studies teaching with film, using the medium to provoke discussion of social or moral issues. The Religious Education programmes make one wonder what sort of instruction goes on in the schools if the programmes reflect it. Titles have included, in a sort of lives of the saints, *Martin Luther*, *Monsieur Vincent*, *Albert Schweitzer*, *The Gospel According to St Matthew*, *A Man Called John*, *John Wesley*. It is difficult to see how such films, let alone something like *The Little World of Don Camillo*, can do what the Project hopes – to make some contribution to teaching Religious Education well in the sixth forms. One must have some doubts, too, about the general History programmes (with titles like *The Lady with the Lamp*, *The Iron Duke*, *Christopher Columbus*, *The War Lord*), raising, like so many others, problems about the precise place of the film programmes in overall teaching strategies.

What this brief survey of work shows, on the whole, is that the use of film educationally on this scale raises a lot of serious problems – about the kinds of film that can be used, what the use of it can achieve, how it can or should be integrated into general teaching. This is as it should be. One should expect experimental projects to raise problems for evaluation. There are obvious general questions which should be asked of teachers in the Project: what do they feel is the main aim and value of the Project? Has it been successful in terms of their teaching? Has it affected their teaching? Has it affected the way pupils respond to the subject? Would they have used film in their own classrooms? How has film been integrated into general teaching programmes? What kinds of preparation and follow-up work have gone on? Has the Project changed any ideas about the value of using film in teaching? Would they in future teaching regard film as a high priority or do they feel it is dispensable? Particular programmes, like the set book film idea, raise serious problems of their own. Their popularity seems based

on a general assumption that showing a film made of a set book (and at Tyneside any version, regardless of age or quality, seems welcome) must be useful to pupils. Why? Might it not be positively harmful? Does a pupil who has seen the film of his set book understand it better, or in a different way, than the pupil who has not? There is evidence already that teachers (here I am thinking not only of Tyneside) use set book films as a way out of the problem of getting pupils to *read* the books, and evidence also that pupils are beginning to answer examination questions from their experience of the films rather than the books, with some odd results. This is not to say that interesting and useful work cannot be done in films from set books. For example, showing three different versions of *Hamlet* raises the work immediately to a rather different level.

So, one must expect problems. Unfortunately at Tyneside there is only a very limited awareness that there are problems and almost no desire to conduct any serious evaluation. Those organising the Project see no way of assessing success or usefulness except in terms of the numbers of children attending. If the films attract audiences then the Project succeeds. No one asks if schools send pupils because programmes are put on. Unfortunately, too, there are signs that the mechanics of the Project are taking over from any conception of its educational validity. There seems no way of explaining some of the choices of film other than in terms of filling dates and seats. Most of the original subject panels designated to organise programmes seem to have lapsed because it is easier to organise programmes without them. The History panel is the only one to have taken its job really seriously and it has had to insist on certain conditions that one would have thought essential to all programmes: that material be previewed and discussed by the teachers concerned, that adequate documentation be provided for teachers and pupils, that timetables be organised to allow for preparatory and follow-up work. It is no accident that the History panel has been responsible for some of the most interesting programming. And it is no accident that because the History panel is exceptional a valuable opportunity of assessing with precision the value of the widespread use of film looks as if it will be lost at Tyneside.

The general impression there is that despite small pockets of limited success and potential value, the Project as a whole does not reveal a real alternative to controlled work in individual schools and classes. Some teachers there, experiencing film on any scale for the first time, already have no doubt that it would prove infinitely more valuable if it could be shown, easily and reasonably cheaply, as and when they wanted it, in their own classrooms. Failing evidence to counter this, would not the LEAs involved at Tyneside do better investing in the multiplication of good viewing facilities in schools, providing larger budgets for film hire, persuading organisations (the BFI included) to make the necessary materials accessible at reasonable cost and offering more teachers facilities for

some training in teaching with film? The results of Tyneside – if they were to be evaluated seriously – might encourage this. As it is, it seems unlikely that any real or useful changes of attitude to film on the part of education authorities will emerge.

The BFI itself, through its identification with the Project, will be involved in its failure. The BFI should be concerned with creating within education the right climate for a vital film culture. The real lesson of Tyneside is likely to be that the function of film in education needs a lot more serious thought than it is getting in this Project. Undoubtedly this is a difficult task, but sloppy thinking, a ‘the more the merrier’ attitude with no regard for quality and a mere appearance of intense activity will not do. On the contrary, it must produce ultimately diminishing returns. Tyneside may come to represent one step forward, two steps back.

The BFI has a function to perform, to promote film ‘as art and entertainment and as a record of contemporary life’, and not just within formal education but in society in general. Does anyone seriously believe that the large-scale showing of set book films or the staging of careers programmes or the importation of filmed opera – whatever else they *might* do – will do anything towards enhancing the cultural status of film or increasing public interest in the art of the cinema?



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Richard Thompson

After three and one-half years of operation, the American Film Institute is the focus of controversy flowing from administrative and policy decisions taken in January 1971. What follows is a review and critique of the AFI's history. I have tried to make clear my relationship to those events.

Many members of the film community have withheld comment on the AFI issue because insufficient information was available to them. Perhaps this report will provide a useful basis for dialogue between the AFI management and the national constituency it should serve.

Creation of the AFI

The United States was the last great film-producing nation to initiate a national film institute. With a combination of Federal Government and private funding (\$1.2 million each from the Federal Government's National Endowment for the Humanities, the Ford Foundation, the Motion Picture Association of America, and private sources), the AFI was officially founded in June 1967. Other agencies have long performed film institutional duties, the Library of Congress, the Museum of Modern Art, the George Eastman House, colleges, universities, film societies, publications, and private individuals.

On December 19, 1966, the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities announced:

. . . the establishment of an American Film Institute, thus formally activating the recommendation of President Lyndon B. Johnson made on the occasion of the signing of the Arts and Humanities Bill on September 29, 1965.

The Film Advisory Council will provide guidance during the preparation of the final report of the Stanford Research Institute, whose comprehensive study on the organization and location of the American Film Institute is scheduled to be completed by mid-February of 1967. Other members of the Film Advisory Council (in addition to Roger Stevens and Gregory Peck) are: Elizabeth Ashley, actress; Sherrill Corwin, president, National Association of Theatre Owners; John Culkin, SJ; director, Center for Communications, Fordham University; Bruce Herschensohn, Herschensohn Motion Picture Productions and producer of USIA's recent film on the

late President Kennedy; Charlton Heston, actor; David Mallery, Director of Studies, National Association of Independent Schools; William L. Pereira, Los Angeles architect; Arnold Picker, executive vice-president, United Artists Corporation; Sidney Poitier, actor; Arthur Schlesinger, Jr, historian; George Seaton, writer-director-producer; George Stevens, Sr, director-producer; George Stevens, Jr, director, Motion Picture and Television Service, US Information Agency; Jack Valenti, president, Motion Picture Association of America; Richard Walsh, president, International Alliance of Theatrical and Stage Employees.

All save George Stevens, Sr, and Charlton Heston became Trustees of the AFI. Heston serves on an advisory committee to the AFI Board of Trustees.

Initial Controversy

In *Readers & Writers*, April/May 1967, Cecile Starr, noted film teacher and editor of *Ideas on Film*, addressed an open letter to Gregory Peck:

Many professional film people – film teachers, film librarians, film society representatives, film students, independent film-makers, and 16mm distributors, among others – feel that those who are shaping the AFI do not know what they are doing or where they are going. We fear that the Hollywood-dominated Advisory Council does not clearly recognize the difference between film art and film entertainment. In its years of plenty, Hollywood showed very little interest in raising the level of public appreciation of film as an art; in helping schools and colleges teach the art of the film and film-making; and in encouraging film artists to work freely toward experimenting with and advancing the art of the motion picture. Hollywood should be represented on the committee, but why as a majority?

She then invoked the Arts Council's obligation to concern itself with film as a fine art, and to decide whether it will be controlled by the industry or 'by people more directly involved with film as an art . . .'

Does the Film Advisory Council represent the people and institutions concerned with film as an art?

Of the sixteen-member committee, four (yourself included) are distinguished Hollywood actors, two are distinguished Hollywood producer-directors, two are distinguished producers of government-sponsored films, four are distinguished representatives of the producers, exhibitors and employees of the film industry; one is a distinguished architect; one a distinguished historian-politician and part-time film critic; and two are distinguished representatives of the film-teaching profession whose writings indicate a strong predilection for Hollywood films.

Why does the Advisory Council not include a representative of the

film society movement; of some of the large and small universities where film-making has been taught for five to twenty years; of non-Hollywood, non-governmental film-makers to whom we must inevitably look for our next generation of film artists? Why are film historians, familiar with the long-standing conflict between film artists and film businessmen, and film critics not included on the Advisory Council? And why are there no representatives of our film libraries in museums, universities and public libraries throughout the country?

Supposedly one reason for overlooking them is that they might become recipients of grants from the Arts Council. This hardly holds up, however, in light of the fact that Father John Culkin, a member of the Film Advisory Council, has received \$71,000 for a project he is to undertake in connection with Fordham University. Surely there are other people, currently engaged in other aspects of film art, who can be counted to serve the Advisory Council with similar selflessness.

Can any lasting and vital activities result from such unplanned planning, such closed-circle operations, such one-sided representations?

Will the \$91,000 study made by the Stanford Research Institute, 'to develop a plan for a national film institute', be made public? If the Film Advisory Council had been more representatively composed, it would have been in a better position to develop its own plan for a national film institute rather than delegate this job to a research group relatively unfamiliar with film art.

Miss Starr then listed many classic films and standard works of film history and aesthetics, wondering how many members of the Advisory Council had seen or read them; then:

Where else other than in the US would an educator dare open a national conference on the teaching of film as an art by remarking that he was not a film specialist and had never seen Eisenstein's *Potemkin* – 'not even the famous steps sequence'? In what other country in the world would such innocently professed ignorance lead to government subsidies for further conferences on film art, and eventually to a permanent place on the National Council on the Arts as its expert on the motion picture? With all the money in the world, with all the good intentions in the world, we do not believe that film art can be advanced one whit in this country without the open and coordinated assistance of everyone in this country who is concerned with film as an art.

Interviewed in *Variety* (April 17, 1967) on what she felt should be done, Miss Starr said:

To start with, I'd throw out the whole present Advisory Council. I'm not asking anyone to agree with my ideas for the American Film Institute, but let's put together a Council of recognized

60 leaders in the arts, people whose concern for film could result in a workable plan for the American Film Institute.

She then provided a list of possible candidates.

Variety (April 24, 1967) devoted most of a page to AFI coverage. A news story noted that a board of trustees would be established. Jack Valenti was quoted as saying that no more than 5 per cent of the board would be major company representatives.*

Gregory Peck responded to the issues raised by Cecile Starr by sidestepping them:

'Her remarks are intemperate. She's badly informed in the stand she's taken.'

He was then paraphrased at length on the research the Advisory Council undertook.

'It's designed to provide a bridge to films, and without Miss Starr probably being aware of it, is just about what she would like it to be.' He added that what it boils down to is that the Council isn't composed of members Miss Starr (or Mr Starr - Ed) would like to see on it.

'We feel we have done an objective job,' said Peck, 'and our whole aim is to provide new opportunities' for young entrants into the field. 'We feel it was wise to have conducted our research without the glare of publicity.'

While castigating Miss Starr for being misinformed, he continued to withhold the information necessary for a well-informed discussion of the issues at hand. The AFI continues to meet such attempts at dialogue with an assurance that things are going well, without details on what is going well or how it is going well or why or where it's going, often coupled, as here, with a mild personal attack on the challenger. The AFI spent the three and one-half years after Peck's statement operating mainly 'without the glare of publicity', or, to be plain, largely in secret.

Cecile Starr responded to Peck's answer in *Variety* (June 7, 1967):

Gregory Peck's statement that my remarks are 'intemperate' and that I'm 'badly informed' in the stand I've taken, seem to me to sidestep the issues I've tried to call to his attention. My stand is that the sixteen-member Film Advisory Council of the

* A separate story summarised an editorial by William Starr (no relation) in the American Federation of Film Society's journal *Film Society Review*, which echoed earlier criticism regarding Board composition, non-representation of non-industry constituencies, and decisions made in which those groups and interests with most at stake had neither representation nor participation: 'The fear widely exists that the country may shortly be faced with a vested interest organizational *fait accompli* which will require years of devoted labour to undo.'

National Council on the Arts, which Peck heads, cannot possibly advance film as an *art* since the great majority of its members have had little or no experience with motion pictures except as a business for profit or for propaganda purposes. That their intentions may be the best I readily concede (a concession which Peck does not seem to grant to mine). But my good will is stretched to its limit when I hear that the leading contender for the position of director of the proposed American Film Institute is at present a political appointee, and that he will be (or has been) chosen by a Council which includes himself, his father, representatives of the Hollywood film industry in which his father is a prominent figure, and representatives of his political party, including a former employee of the office which he now heads.

Variety commented editorially:

Gregory Peck's quip in Washington on Monday (5) that the AFI was 'reviewed' before the curtain went up does not answer nor dismiss the objections and fears of those who wanted to be heard, and were not. The Institute has been established on the basis of unreported discussions and an unpublished report of the Stanford Research outfit. It is not that the Institute will not proceed to serve useful purposes, but that it has made a mystery of its reasons, which is never good public relations.

The same issue of *Variety* cited AFI's goals in the areas of filmmaker training, film education, film production, preservation and cataloguing (archives), and publications. Of these five, film education and publications are vague programmes:

Film education (primarily to explore ways to assist 'development and improvement').

Publications (including more and better textbooks on film-making).

When established, the Board of Trustees included Ashley, Corwin, Culkin, Herschensohn, Mallery, Pereira, Picker, Poitier, Seaton, and Valenti from the Advisory Council; also named were 16mm distributor Charles Benton; writer-director Francis Ford Coppola; former US Commissioner of Education Francis Keppel; film-maker Richard Leacock; Group W TV syndication president Donald McGannon; writer Dan Taradash; and director Fred Zinneman.

George Stevens, Jr, was appointed Director of the AFI. Stevens is, of course, the son of the noted Hollywood director. From his official AFI Press biography:

Stevens began his career in films during college as an assistant on *A Place in the Sun* and *Shane*. Following two years as a motion picture officer in the US Air Force, he directed a number of television shows including *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* and *Peter Gunn*. He was an associate producer on *The Diary of Anne Frank* and also directed location segments of that film. In 1962 the late

An article in the June 9 issue of *Variety* gave Stevens' defence of the AFI:

Absolutely everybody who's criticized the Institute either for what it will or won't be doing, is dead wrong, he suggested, since even daddy [himself] doesn't have a clear idea of what it's going to be when it grows up.

Precisely what Cecile Starr had said five months earlier!

The article gave Stevens' description of a wide range of specific alternatives in the areas of archives, production, and film-maker training; and then:

The three areas above, which are likely to account for the major portion of the Institute's three-year budget, have also occupied the bulk of Stevens' time in the brief period since he's been installed in office, and rather than being discouraged that he hasn't found the answers, he appears pleased that in so short a time he's uncovered the questions. But in two other areas, film education and publications, he suggests that he hasn't found time to really explore the problems.

At this point in the story, John Culkin speaks for these areas, suggesting that, in time, the AFI Education Department might involve itself in a teacher-training programme, a curriculum study, and in providing textbooks, but that the big effort would centre on

* One of the striking things about the AFI is the presence of ex-United States Information Agency people in key positions. Richard Kahlenberg, who was one of the first people appointed to the staff and is currently the AFI's Assistant Director for Planning, had previously worked for the United States Information Agency as an assistant cultural attaché. Robert Goodman, who became the number two man at the AFI in 1968, had previously been assistant director of the United States Information Agency. Antonio Vellani, who became responsible for the grants to film-makers programme, had been on the staff of the United States Information Agency when Stevens headed it.

Articles in *Film Comment* (vol 5, no 2, and vol 4, nos 2 and 3) contain a good deal of information about the United States Information Agency. The latter issue documents Stevens's decision to make a United States Information Agency feature documentary on John Kennedy upon the President's assassination; it also discusses the extraordinary use and distribution of the film *Years of Lightning, Day of Drums* and the assignment of all domestic profits from the film to the John F. Kennedy Centre for the Performing Arts. Roger L. Stevens (no relation), chairman of the Board of the Kennedy Centre, appointed the film's producer, George Stevens, Jr, its writer-director, Bruce Herschensohn (later successor to Stevens in heading United States Information Agency film activities), and its narrator, Gregory Peck, to the original sixteen-man Film Advisory Council to create an American Film Institute. This Advisory Council was a part of the National Endowment for the Arts, of which Roger Stevens was then chairman.

spreading the word of the film education movement, at primary and secondary levels. *This limited view, omitting as it does the possibility of leadership and creativity in the education field, has hovered over AFI's educational efforts since, as we shall see, such efforts have been primarily in the areas of organisation, and of data collection and distribution. These are responsive, administrative areas, not initiative, creative ones.*

AFI's first promotional piece was a handsome, lavishly illustrated pamphlet which describes AFI's 'response to needs in several areas of film':

Preservation and Archives: To preserve, catalogue and provide for the increased accessibility of outstanding American films.

Education: To develop in America the most discerning and responsive film audience possible, through the improvement of film study methods and support of teacher education in film.

Film-maker Training: To encourage and accelerate the development of professional artists in the field of film.

Production: To create additional opportunities in film production for talented new film-makers and developing professionals.

Publications: To stimulate excellence in research and writing about all aspects of motion pictures and television.

These are then developed in greater detail. The Education section is titled 'The Film Audience'; AFI's rhetoric in discussing education consistently focuses on an 'audience' which can be improved by distribution of data and support of the primary and secondary school film education movement. The Santa Barbara Conference, advisory service and newsletter, and fellowships for graduate degree candidates are the only programmes listed. 'In these ways it is hoped that film will be furthered by its inevitable critic – the audience.'

Publications. Next to films themselves, published materials may constitute the most significant means of stimulating progress in the art of film. The literature of the American film, despite important individual accomplishments, does not presently provide sufficient intellectual base for the advancement of film as art.

The publications division of AFI will seek to stimulate research and writing about all aspects of film, especially but not exclusively the American film, by writers and scholars the world over. The Institute will contribute to the literature of film in several ways. By establishing a motion picture magazine, a literate, lively periodical designed for everyone with a serious interest in film and the film industry. By cooperating in the publication of books on the history and aesthetics of film and on the achievements of individual artists – books of particular use in colleges and universities and to the interested public. By producing films about film. By developing a programme of oral history, to record past and present accomplish-

ments of film artists. By identifying research needs in all areas of the American film, in cooperation with universities, film societies, museums and other agencies devoted to film research. By reproducing film scripts for use in training courses, to permit analysis of the problems of written style and visual form in the film.

While every art in the end survives by its own achievements, every art also in due course creates a literature which sustains and guides its developments. One of AFI's goals is a comprehensive literature of film, providing audiences with an opportunity to appreciate the medium more fully and young film-makers a chance to learn from those who have gone before.

A repertory programme is generally described, aiding in the availability and circulation of prints among theatres, exhibitors, film societies, etc; no mention of a national film theatre is made.

Implementation

It would be impractical to cover the history of the AFI in detail. I will attempt to summarise major steps in the Institute's development, with closer attention given to the areas at issue, Education and Publications, research and scholarship. In examining the following programmes and decisions, it must be borne in mind that while mandates and responsibilities have been passed down to middle management (programme managers and officers), authority to make decisions is consequently difficult to assign.

In its first year, the AFI allocated \$1.2 million to the Archives programme for nitrate print rescue and preservation. This has been the most successful AFI programme; it has also operated with the greatest independence from top management, possibly because it is the only programme of the five major programmes managed by an Assistant Director of the Institute. The AFI also sponsored or co-sponsored conferences on film and education during its first year. It established a \$500,000 production fund for grants to independent film-makers, new and old; this programme, too, has been quite successful in fulfilling its goals. Feature film production plans were announced, but because these plans underwent considerable changes before realisation, they will be described later. The National Film Catalogue project was commenced, linking the Archive staff with the Library of Congress to computerise credit data for all films produced in the US, a mammoth undertaking now nearly finished; this, too, has been a successful and useful project. A Film Information Service for educators and scholars was initiated in New York City. Although it has been closed, a long-term lease requires the AFI to continue to pay a rental estimated at \$20,000 per year for the unused office. Planning began for the Center for Advanced Film Studies, to be located in Los Angeles. Richard Kahlenberg was placed in charge of basic planning for the Center, which would be the AFI's most ambitious and expensive effort; he was replaced as

archives head by Sam Kula. An oral history programme was begun, operating from the UCLA Film Department, funded jointly by the AFI and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Mid-year 1968, Robert Geller was named head of the Education Department, assisted by Education Officers Ron Sutton (later to succeed Geller upon his resignation in 1969) and Kit Laybourne. In July, AFI's Santa Barbara Leadership Conference for film educators began. It was a four-week session for forty teachers in close informal contact with film-makers, university film professors, industry representatives, and so on. 'It is planned to publish the papers and curricula developed' from seminars and workshops held during the Conference, the AFI announced. Though Kit Laybourne prepared extensive report material on this key conference, the AFI chose not to publish it. Instead, a small, anonymous promotional pamphlet entitled 'The First American Film Institute Leadership Seminar: Teaching the Film' appeared. It is a summary of the structure of the Conference, a list of the visiting faculty, and a survey of AFI's projected Model Site Funding project. It does not deal with specific results of the Conference, and could have been written before the event.

In September, the Education Department announced Education Fellowships of \$1,500 for MA candidates, \$2,500 for PhD candidates – up to ten to be awarded as the 'first step toward increasing the number of teachers'. Actually it was one of AFI's very few steps to directly support young film scholars and critics in their work. After its first year, it was discontinued. In November 1968 the department announced the first of its Model Site grants, thirteen in all, advancing some funding to develop film education programmes and curricula around the country. The project was discontinued after its second year.

In February 1969 the Oral History Project was transferred from the UCLA Film Department to AFI proper; the Louis B. Mayer Foundation grant of \$150,000 over these years made it possible. James R. Silke was made head of the project. Silke was the founder and former editor of *Cinema*, and later editor of *Movies International*, *The Real West*, and *Assault*. The first projects commissioned were the oral histories Peter Bogdanovich completed with Leo McCarey and Allan Dwan. Oral histories of William Wellman and Mervyn LeRoy and Busby Berkeley were commissioned; none of these has been completed though their deadlines are past.

In the *Journal of Aesthetic Education* (vol 3, no 3, July 1969) Robert Geller and Sam Kula published an 'article developed in consultation with Mr George Stevens, Jr', entitled 'Toward Filmic Literacy: the role of the American Film Institute'. The article is probably the most articulate and scholarly presentation of AFI programmes and their goals that has appeared.

Under the heading 'The Need for Enlightened Film Education', they note: 'The principal concern is about who teaches what to

whom and how it is taught.' A cautionary summary of destructive tendencies in American film education follows, then: 'But as an art form films must be understood as objects providing opportunities primarily for aesthetic experience.' Later: 'It is not, of course, AFI's function to establish inflexible aesthetic principles.' Discussing the Center for Advanced Film Studies: 'The Center is intended to serve as a bridge between film study and film-making as a profession.' 'A major goal of such a programme is to create an ambience for fruitful discourse on film.' As had been customary, they note: 'The Center will also accept a limited number of fellows pursuing careers as film critics and historians.' The role of those critics and scholars within the Center, and the AFI, is undefined. Many other topics are covered, including the films-on-film series, initiated with Bogdanovich's documentary on John Ford. (Due to extreme schedule and budget over-runs, and unforeseen difficulties encountered in obtaining releases for film clips, this film has not yet been completed, and further films-on-film are not planned at this time.)

II. SECOND YEAR-

In July 1969 the AFI issued its first annual report, a thirty-two-page pamphlet with a high picture-to-copy ratio. *Variety* remarked, pinpointing a common AFI press characteristic: 'Of all the items reviewed in the annual report of the AFI issued last week, only in one area was any "hard news" revealed.' They were referring to the naming of the five individuals who received screen-writing grants. The report itself reviews most areas without adding much new data. In the area of publications, it promises:

. . . to publish *American Film*, a magazine that will deal with the past, present and future of the cinema. Special attention will be devoted to the ideas, methods and words of those who have made and are now making films. Fact will be emphasized over opinion, with the aim of providing a continuing source of information and experienced thought about the craft, the art, the economics – about all the factors which make film-making what it is. [Note the crude polarisation of the critical process between 'fact' and 'opinion'.] AFI will work with publishing houses and writers to encourage the publication of books and monographs about all aspects of film-making and film history.

When Chloe Aaron interviewed research fellows after the January upheaval, Greg Ford remembered that she had an AFI budget summary which contained a \$50,000 item for the *American Film* project, which had been assigned to Jim Silke, currently Editorial Director in charge of publications. The project has been discontinued and written off as a loss. This write-off figure is approximately equal to the entire Production costs figure listed for all British Film Institute publications for the year ending March 31, 1970.

With the services of the top-flight publicity agent firm, John Springer Associates (representatives of the Burtons, Henry Fonda, *Satyricon*, Z, etc), the AFI augmented its many pamphlets and press releases. The cost has unofficially been cited as a retainer of \$20,000 per annum, plus per-job fees and expenses above that. This was in addition to a full-time staff member in Washington assigned to public relations – apparently at \$12,000 per year.

At the end of July, *Filmfacts* became an official AFI publication. It is in line with the AFI's emphasis on data, rather than opinion. The periodical publishes the credits of all commercial features released in the US, and includes a selection from daily and weekly reviews.

In the same month, the Center for Advanced Film Studies opened. There were eighteen Fellows (1½ in Research, rather than the three solicited) and a faculty consisting of full-time members Frantisek Daniel, James Blue, Jim Kitses; part-time member Jim Silke. Kitses was given the Center Research Department responsibilities; he hired me from Chicago to work with him.

The Center is located in an old Beverly Hills mansion, rented for \$1 per year from the city, but requiring renovation, adaptation, equipment, and mansion-scale staff and maintenance totalling over \$1 million. Many films are screened there for Fellows, and most Fellows are in some stage of film-making, for the most part scenario writing or re-writing. Production equipment and facilities are limited.

Center faculty in general were unconcerned with, or by, the chaotic lack of programme, organisation, or structure given to events and screenings at the Center. Ultimately, the Research Department was able to make some progress in this area, but generally without active support from other areas of the Center. At the end of the first academic year, Blue resigned; the AFI did not replace this key faculty position, combining, as Blue did, first-hand film-making knowledge with critical experience and teaching insight. In fact, with twice as many Fellows at the Center, the AFI began its second year with a smaller faculty than that of its first year. Apparently, it will begin its third year with an even smaller faculty, as Kitses has not been replaced. Stevens is always listed as a faculty member, but he performs no specific faculty functions. He spends roughly half his time at the Center. The rest is spent in Washington or travelling, fund raising, and so on.

In its 1971-72 academic year brochure for the Center, the AFI announced that tuition will be \$2,500 (which will be waived if a means test demonstrates inability to pay – somewhat similar to scholarship procedures in other academic institutions). With the advent of tuition, it is interesting to compare the Center to other advanced film training centres. Unlike others, the Center is not accredited and so cannot grant degrees. Nor does it give grades, offer courses or formal curriculum. It has a faculty (for forty-odd

68 Fellows and at least half as many auditors) which consists of Frantisek Daniel, academic head of the Center and full-time faculty; Tony Vellani, most of whose time is occupied with the Film-maker Grant and Production programmes he has charge of; and Jim Silke, who, on a half-time basis, is in charge of the AFI's Publications and Research programmes as well as arranging for the guest appearance-seminars which occur roughly once a week. By addition of fractions, nearly two full-time faculty members for forty Fellows; at \$2,500, it's no bargain.

At the end of 1969, Stevens announced the opening of the AFI Theatre in Washington, 'to stimulate interest in the cinema, and to enlarge the number of Washington's discerning filmgoers by calling attention to great films of different eras'. Eight months later, the Theatre moved to the L'Enfant Plaza complex, an 800-seat theatre which *Variety* said had already 'failed as a commercial outlet, partly because it is off the beaten track'. AFI Theatre memberships were available first for \$5, then \$10 (\$5 for students) per year. Membership confers these privileges: one receives schedules and mailing list material, and pays \$1.25 admission to screenings. No participation or vote. The AFI claimed 7,000 memberships for the Theatre, a revenue of \$70,000 at \$10 per member; yet the Theatre is currently running at a deficit the AFI itself estimates to be approximately \$100,000 per year – for a strictly local-impact, Washington area programme.

Focus

By June of 1969, the AFI's estimate was that it had been successful in looking after film-makers and their films, in programmes such as production and grants, film-maker training (with the Center for Advanced Studies about to open), and archives; but had not yet found its stride in the areas of dissemination or appreciation – by which words the AFI meant education, publications, research, and scholarly activities aimed at the world of ideas. At this point, thinking seemed to embrace the notion that if the AFI is for the artist and his works more than for the audience (in practice), it should lead from that strength. Indeed, as the Center, Production Department, and Archives already served the film-maker, Publication, Education, and the AFI Theatre should do the same. This crucial turn of ideas, centring all AFI conceptual thinking on the film-maker primarily and explicitly, underlies many of AFI's later difficulties.

Education

1969 was the Education Department's peak year in terms of staff, funding, and activity. During this year it reached a staff size of seven (exclusive of interlocking support from Research – a staff of three) – a department manager, two officers, and four assistants. The year before, Education created the Community Film Workshop

Council with a \$50,000 seed grant; this has proved to be a good investment, maintaining vigorous activity and finding other funding for the ensuing years, mostly under the guidance of Geller, who headed CFWC after resigning as AFI Education manager. At the end of 1968, Education Membership was established. Through 1969 and 1970, it came to include over 2,000 teachers in the field, serving as the centre of an information and organisational network. The goals of the Membership plan were:

(1) To establish a national clearing house for information and curricula; (2) to provide consultation and advisory service; (3) to provide an official liaison with other national education groups; (4) to act as a stimulus to regional and local film study organisations; and (5) to become a news link for sharing important film education activities within the country.

Education Members were solicited most heavily and receptively for feedback, information, and suggestions, but, as with other AFI membership programmes, Education Members paid a yearly fee but had no voting power or status within the AFI administration.

The Fall 1970 *Newsletter* carried Ron Sutton's new view of the Department's function, probably necessitated by shrinking funds and staff (by this time, the staff had shrunk to Sutton, the manager, Dispenza, the field officer, Greensfelder, assistant, and possibly one more secretary. Membership price rose from \$6 to \$10 with no increase in benefits: members received the *Newsletter*, *Membership Directory*, and *Guide to College Film Courses*).

. . . but we tend now to think of our work for the seventies primarily as a need-surveying, information-sharing lobby for film education. The vast and complex needs in the field argue against our attempting to meet them through direct funding (such as film study grants). We see our role as a catalyst in the field. It seems appropriate that we concentrate on convincing leaders in business, foundations, government and education that film study needs strong, solid financial assistance.

In addition, he listed information exchange, summer schools, and aid to groups wishing to stage their own regional screenings – the AFI had discontinued its regional screening activities.

In February of 1970, Sutton outlined the three basic education field needs the AFI would attempt to service (under reduced staff and funding support): 1, development of some understanding of what film study is, particularly important in high schools, where film courses are largely offered through English or Humanities departments; 2, Leadership courses, 'with more film courses in higher education, we need more trained people to teach them'; 3, Materials – films and print materials.

For the Center's second academic year, the Research Department accepted three Research Fellows, which gave a total of $4\frac{1}{2}$ with the $1\frac{1}{2}$ remaining second-year Research Fellows. This group, along with an actively involved staff and some other interested Fellows, began screenings in support of Research Fellows' projects, began a weekly critical seminar presented by a different person in the Department each time, and, in January, began to develop some group publication projects. At this time, Kitses was finishing a book-length report on the summer seminar. Three research auditors had been selected to join the group at the end of the month.

Feature

In late May 1970, when the coming financial crisis of the AFI had been foreseen by top management and there was considerable uncertainty about whether money would be available to open the Center the following October for Fellows who had already been accepted, the AFI moved into the production of a feature film. Reasons for this decision have not been made public, or clear. The film, by Center Fellow Stanton Kaye, titled *In Pursuit of Treasure*, was finally budgeted at \$130,000, which the AFI apparently provided. At that time, many within the AFI considered the budget extremely low. To date, the film has cost \$260,000. Much of the overage was covered by companies of some Trustees. It appears that completion cost will be over \$300,000.

III. BLOW UP

In October 1970 David Lunney was hired at \$22,000 to become (administrative) manager of the Center. His background was not in film, but in theatrical management. He also worked for the Ford Foundation. Early in the week of January 18, 1971, he fired Marie Fitch, a secretary, under highly questionable circumstances. Staff relations have never been good at the AFI; this firing united the staff, all of whom attended the regularly scheduled staff meeting the day after the firing and asked for an explanation of the firing. At that time staff also read a document which had been under preparation for three weeks previously, listing grievances and suggesting changes. The staff meeting lasted a day and a half, at the end of which Marie Fitch was allowed to exercise an earlier-approved transfer to another department, rather than remain fired. Staff expressed their hope that this would open up new and more successful staff relations; the tone at the end of the meeting was positive.

Management Responds

The following day, Friday, January 22, summarily, without warning or consultation, by David Lunney, Steven Manes, library assistant, was fired; his supervisor, librarian Anne Schlosser, was called

into the session as an afterthought; Richard Thompson, Research manager, and Jeryll Taylor, Research Coordinator, were fired together; and Jim Kitses, Director of Critical Studies at the Center and full faculty member, was fired.

We were told at the firings that we were being fired due to budget tightness. Later, the AFI maintained it had foreseen these trims for several months. However, they had not been discussed with department heads and administrators involved, nor had any warning been given to personnel, and at one stroke AFI's research and critical studies department was removed.

Many saw the firings as an example to the staff to stay in line or suffer the consequences, since two of those dismissed had been active in the Marie Fitch affair.

Overlapping these firings, Stevens conducted a hastily arranged meeting in his office with some Production Fellows – but no Research Fellows – at which some explanation for the firings was given; content of that meeting has not been made public. By 7:00 pm the same evening, Bill Scott, production manager of the Center, moved his resignation up to be effective immediately, in protest. Saturday and Sunday, Stevens, Kahlenberg, Lunney, Daniel, Silke and Vellani worked long hours at the Center, holding meetings with Fellows and staff, consolidating their position and smoothing things over.

Research Fellows' Response

On Monday morning, the Research Fellows distributed the following 'Appeal to Our Fellow Fellows' to the Film-making, Screen-writing, Camera, and Production Fellows:

1. We no longer feel there is a place for us and the critical study we embody at the Center. It has been suggested that we continue as Fellows without either specific staff or tasks under the part-time guidance of faculty members who have not been previously involved with the Research Department. We do not feel that the committed, vital work of Jim Kitses can be replaced by present staff, and we therefore cannot accept the proposed spineless, vapid program.
2. We feel that the dismissed Research Department was in fact fulfilling the true, stated goals of the Center in that it was a genuine community for film study and education. We furthermore believe that George Stevens, Richard Kahlenberg, and David Lunney, who took this decision, having no meaningful contact with the Research Department, were ill-equipped to accurately assess its true worth. We can only conclude that they were either wilfully unaware of the Department's actual accomplishments or chose to reject on principle the critical function of the Center.
3. We find this action appalling both in the specific, high-handed, callous manner in which it was conducted and in the general principle it embodies. We cannot escape the conclusion: In a

Center devoted to 'advanced film study', written, carefully argued critical film study no longer has an official place.

4. This action, we also feel, is symptomatic of many similar actions taken by the AFI administration. It is precisely this type of administrative vacillation, duplicity, dilletantism and lack of clear priorities which have stunted the creative growth of the Center from the very start.

Therefore we ask you as fellow Fellows to take these considerations into mind. They will pertain to your future as well as ours. Both official and unofficial discussions of this matter are now taking place. This may be the best and most effective time to make your complaints known. The evolving situation in which the needs of Fellows are being compromised by ineffective administration will eventually affect everyone at the Center.

Kay Loveland, assistant to the head of the Production Department, announced her resignation in protest the same day. The document in which she announced her resignation was the first of several she prepared, at length and in detail, on administrative and staff problems and solutions. They should be consulted separately if possible; they are too long for inclusion here.

The next day, Michael Barlow, programme coordinator, resigned in protest. Thirty-five members of AFI staff, both in Washington, DC, and California, signed the following statement of solidarity:

We the undersigned members of the staff of the American Film Institute express our solidarity with those recently fired from the AFI, those who have resigned in protest, and the Research Fellows who have lost their department.

We find their grievances just and their arguments in the best interest of the AFI.

We are committed, as we have always been, to the stated aims of the AFI: production, education, preservation and archives, AFI theatre, film-maker training, publications. We sincerely hope that from this controversy will result a preservation and clarification of those goals.

Special Meeting

Late that afternoon, Stevens assembled all staff, faculty, Fellows and auditors (except fired or resigned staff) for a meeting. Trustees Gregory Peck, Sidney Barlow (a financier), and Arthur Knight attended, possibly because this open controversy was taking place two weeks before the Board was to meet at Greystone, and four weeks before the National Endowment was to meet at Greystone. Stevens reviewed the history of the AFI at length, then came to the specific issue of the firings. I regret not quoting large chunks from the transcript; they give a good understanding of the AFI's administrative style. In summary, Stevens first said that a staff of forty-four was considered by Ford Foundation and by the AFI to be

oversize in support of forty Fellows; the firings were to trim staff down (staff requirements would have been smaller had the AFI not selected a white elephant of a mansion for its California centre; also, it should be noted that four months after the firings 'to reduce staff size', staff size had reached or passed forty-four once again). Stevens claimed it was obvious to those involved in the decision (not named, but not including most top faculty or staff) that cost reduction would have to take place in personnel. This was not explained either. Regarding the secretary fired, then rehired, Stevens noted that he 'backed Lunney up all the way' (it is typical of AFI's authoritarian administrative style that, given the chance to act for both staff and administrator by stepping in and arbitrating, Stevens chose rather to entrench authority and further alienate staff). Stevens admitted that the decision of who to fire was taken the day after the last staff meeting (wherein two Research Department staff were vocally prominent). Stevens then defended making the decision without consulting the Board by reducing the issue simply to personnel and budget arrangement – ignoring the large-scale structural and policy implications of the decision.

Stevens maintained that Kitses's firing was a mistake, an oversight; in AFI-influenced press coverage, the firing of Kitses was consistently blurred over and in effect denied; apparently after the decision was implemented, someone realised that Kitses's national prominence and stature should have been more subtly considered. Under pressure, Stevens said that Kitses would remain with the AFI as a research grantee, and continue to give seminars for extra payment. He also indicated that this newly released salary money – \$42,000 total in yearly salaries of fired staff – would make staff raises possible, and increase production funds. In the intense question-and-answer period that followed, Stevens was put under direct pressure. When challenged on the point that across-the-board salary cuts at top and middle levels could have retained the severed programmes, Stevens averred that that had been considered, but said no more. Throughout, Stevens continually assumed responsibility for decisions, and invited blame for them if they were bad, but never felt a responsibility to explain those decisions, nor to consider a decision-making structure in which more concerned parties could participate.

Kitses and Sutton

On Friday, January 29, Jim Kitses issued a letter to AFI management and staff, Center Fellows, auditors, and faculty, in which he reported:

On Thursday, January 28th, AFI's director, George Stevens, Jr, invited me to discuss these problems. He assured me that the difficulties were a result of misunderstandings, and they had been exploited to damage the AFI. George Stevens also insisted that my

dismissal had been a mistake, that some new relationship had been envisaged from the outset of the ' deliberations ' that led to this act. This new relationship would have included the Mayer Research Associateship awarded to me some months ago (and scheduled to commence in the fall), plus ' tutoring ' and ' special projects ' ; my salary level (\$17,000) would have remained unaffected. This explanation bears no resemblance to what I was told by David Lunney when I was dismissed. In any case, George Stevens made clear that such a relationship was now possible, and urged me to accept it. I have declined and now feel that I must speak out to make clear my reasons.

If AFI staff have taken extreme actions as a result of these precipitate dismissals, it is because they see here the culmination of a pattern of unsatisfactory management-staff relations. This is not the result of malice or mean-spiritedness on the part of management, but flows inevitably from a confused administration that has not expressed to its staff a clear set of aims and priorities. In such a situation, where decisions are improvised and the enemy is always simply a lack of money, the result is that an institution *drifts* rather than has a clear thrust. Cutbacks, the abandonment of programs, dismissals, the dissolution of whole departments – all of these typically imposed from above – demoralize and alienate staff. Having given of themselves in the belief that their contribution is in the best interests of AFI, they suddenly find they or their programs are completely dispensable; quite simply, they feel the victims of the institution.

[George Stevens, Jr] asked what constructive proposals I could make. . . . I called for the creation of a department within AFI specifically responsible for Education, Research, and Publications. Such a department would have to be funded separately and be directly responsible to a committee, on which AFI's Director would serve, consisting of representatives of the film education community. Such a department could spell out a clear program of aims, priorities and deadlines, and work to achieve these. Such a department would also strive to create conditions of employment (and severance), and a fair and rational salary policy – a model that AFI as a whole urgently needs. I expressed my feelings to George Stevens that I would be prepared to work within such a system, the creation of which I took to be essential if the enormous credibility gap that has grown up is to be bridged.

He felt that some of the ideas I had outlined were useful and could be discussed, and that much of this would get done in due course. However, he offered no specific assurances that this kind of radical change in AFI policy and planning would take place. Given the crisis of confidence that now exists, I had no choice but to decline

his invitation to continue within the AFI in the ill-defined role he had suggested. This offer seemed an obvious panacea for the immediate situation rather than an attempt to confront the underlying problems.

I do this because of my personal commitment to people and movies, and in the best interests of the AFI. If the American Film Institute can begin to demonstrate – in its programs rather than its press – a core commitment to the creation of a dynamic film culture, I would be grateful for the opportunity to re-join its ranks. As it stands, I have no alternative but to work toward that goal outside it.

Also on Friday, Ron Sutton, AFI Education Director, issued his resignation; this left the Research Department totally without faculty or staff, and the Education Department with one officer and one secretary. Sutton's statement begins with an attack on the 'incredible' treatment of persons by AFI management, then echoes Kitces's point that the Education Department was not consulted in the decision to cut away its Research Department interlocking support. He continues:

Furthermore, I remain convinced that this firing was carried forth in an atmosphere of retribution or 'showing of management strength' in relation to the 'Marie Fitch incident'. No conversation I have had with any administrative official has persuaded me otherwise. It is just too large a leap of faith to ask me to believe that this was all coincidental. To be told by the Assistant Director Kahlenberg that this was a well-considered, long-term policy decision, and to discover five minutes later in calling Robert Goodman, the Associate Director and Financial Officer of the Institute, that he knew nothing about the decision really strains the credulity of a twelve-year-old. If it was long-term, then I cry 'foul' because I wasn't consulted. If it was decided and executed hastily as a retaliation for the forced Fitch re-hiring, as I believe it was, then my cry of 'foul' is even more appropriate. In any case, I no longer wish to be a party of any kind to such arbitrary and insolent administration.

But a further reason for my decision to leave is that I simply will not stand for yet another weakening of the Institute's work in the areas of education, research, and scholarship. The area has always had the lowest amount of money assigned for its needs, despite the fact that this work relates directly to the largest number of people. I have never been given a firm budget. I have had to make single requests on all items. When I was shown a budget for the Department, it was inaccurate, showing money spent for salaries that was never expended, including grants that never went through the Department, and with no credit given for income received from membership and sale of materials. Complaints about this were always met with the statement that it was being worked on. One and one-half years is a lot of time spent juggling figures. My

confidence in the handling of funds and their proper assignment according to the original goals of the Institute has been strained to the breaking point.

In a joint letter 'To the Educational and Critical Community At Large', Kitses and Sutton warned:

Therefore, we feel compelled to state to the film education and critical community we have worked with over the past years that their interests are no longer represented by the American Film Institute and that for us to continue further as employees of the AFI would only compromise the work we have sought to accomplish.

On January 31, 108 persons involved in film education and research in attendance at the Midwest Film Conference signed a petition addressed to the AFI Board of Trustees. It read:

Because we value highly the work of the Research and Education Departments of the AFI we are deeply disturbed by reports of firings and resignations in those departments. If the Board does not reverse what seems to be a major shift in functioning we intend to withdraw our support of the AFI and do all that we can to make public what we regard as unconsidered and irresponsible executive action damaging to the continued progress of film study.

Signatories included college and university film department heads and instructors; film education movement leaders J. Paul Carrico and Fr Bob Duggan; students at all levels; film society directors; heads of film distribution companies; editors of film magazines; recipients of AFI Model Sites grants; and Jack C. Ellis, head of Northwestern University's film department and long-time leader in the university film education movement, also current president of the Society for Cinema Studies. Ellis sent copies of the petition, with a covering letter, to Nancy Hanks; Congressman John Brademas, Chairman of the Committee on Education that grants AFI's NEH money; Senator Claiborne Pell, similarly involved; and Dr. Harold Howe of the Ford Foundation.

The Board of Trustees agreed to meet the dismissed staff and those who had resigned, to hear their views.

Daniel's Position Paper

Just prior to our appearance before the Board, Frantisek Daniel, former Dean of the Faculty at FAMU, the Czech film school, now Dean of Fellows and academic head of the Center, presented to the Board a new position paper for the Center. I will quote at length from this document because, as George Stevens, Jr, later put it, it has been 'endorsed' by the Board of Trustees as a new direction for the Center, and for the roles of research, scholarship and education with the AFI; it has thus become something of an official position paper.

After summarising the AFI's main goals, 'to function as a unique national Film Conservatory' with emphasis on training film artists and craftsmen, Daniel said: 'A necessary adjunct to the Center's programme of expanded tutorial relationships is a real integration of film *theory* into film *practice* – a *merging* and mutual stimulation exchange of these two areas of interest and activity.' He then envisaged the structure of a very elaborate film research institute, which he asserted is needed in the US; but concluded: 'It goes without saying that such a [Research] Center would be entirely created within or with the participation of the AFI. . . . The immediate problem is, it seems, a lack of financial resources to subsidize the evolvement of such a Center of Department inside the AFI.'

There are, however:

. . . other vast fields of interest concerning AFI. These are now covered by the Education Department which should desirably be functioning to its full capacity, collecting, studying, evaluating, analyzing, synthesizing, and generalizing all the different experiences and experiments in film education, elaborating and introducing the most advanced methods, forms, procedures, systems, and combinations of those, etc etc. [Quite a job for one Education Officer and one secretary. – R.T.] In addition to the exchange of opinions and experiences thriving inside the country, thorough study of the achievements abroad, publication of textbooks, monographs, chrestomathys, methodological instruction in translation is, or should be, a part of the Educational Department activities.

At this point, Daniel distinguished between two interpretations of film education: one as

. . . education of the film consumer, film viewer, film audience – that is the development of critical judgement, esthetical apprehension, and an understanding of the film language in the broader context of cinematic and diverse art forms, a sense for the logoci of film history, etc etc.

The other as

. . . active creativity, learning, and the mastering of the film-making process itself, with all its related necessary technical, productional, organizational, methodological and artistic skills.

Then:

From Jim Kitses's memorandum . . . it appears that just the scholarly, theoretical, speculative and passive Film Education should be favoured and promoted.

As a matter of fact, this is not at all evident from any portion of Kitses's memorandum.

78 The other, the functional, practical, vocational, the active education seems to be considered of lesser importance or beyond the scope and orbit of the proposed [Research] Department's interest. From our point of view, this second category of film education needs even more consideration and a Center of a Department considered with advancing and generalizing experiences in this field would be as much a necessity as the Department proposed by Jim Kitses.

Daniel's point here is not clear to me; the AFI does have an entire Center devoted to the Advanced Study of film-making, which could, and some say should, be concerned with 'advancing and generalizing experiences' in the field of practical film education. That the Center has been unable to make its method and results available to any beyond the forty Fellows working there seems extravagant and, possibly, indicative of a central lack of articulation at the Center.

In spite of the AFI's enormous financial outlay for the Center, Daniel went on to label such a department, on the necessary national scale, beyond 'present affordable possibilities of AFI'.

He then asserted the allegedly overlooked importance of audio-visual teaching aids, discussed it at length, and announced:

We hoped and still hope that the Center for Advanced Film Studies will produce such instructional pictures originating from the fruitful collaboration of Research and Filmmaking Fellows and serving as inspirational examples of how films can be used toward the furtherance of film education. We hope the pictures or tapes dealing with different problems of this nature will be made at the Center, which, because of its relation to the film community in Hollywood, has the best opportunity to develop teaching of this exciting calibre.

No further support was given for this statement; no explanation of how production of audio-visual materials is cheaper than the non-hardware Research activities earlier described by Daniel as beyond the AFI means.

Daniel summed up his general position as follows:

As the profile and characteristics of the best film artists are revealed, as the results of the best film schools in the world become apparent, as the time-weathered experience of other educational institutions involved in practical, professional artistic training prove, the possible theoretical approaches which legitimately treat any particular art form, the 'conservatory', or 'academy' type schools need, demand, and cultivate a specific, limited and clear-cut portion of it. Film theory, as it exists today, must be considered as an extended discipline which becomes amplified, ramified, and further structured by enriching itself on the one hand independently of the development of the cinematic art and on the other, as an outgrowth of its incorporation with the theories of communication and mass culture which coincides or combines with other social, scientific disciplines.

It is not the sociology of film, psychology (or psychopathology) philosophy of time (as developed, for example, in the works of authors like Mayer, Malraux, Epstein, Barjaud, Chiarini, Barbara, or in later works of Lawson); it is not the philosophic and ideological analysis of film language, film semantics, theory of information (as practised in the works of Mets [sic], Plazewski, Morin, Eddo, [sic] etc); nor is it the theory of communication and mass culture (McLulan) [sic] which originated at the professional film schools.

All of this was then applied to the film-maker. The film-maker is the rhetorical and conceptual centre of the entire paper, and by extension, then, of the entire AFI. Activities should:

. . . serve this purpose and goal: exposing the Fellows to different often controversial theories, poetics, stylistics, and aesthetics; thus, in this manner helping them to discover and define their own personal individual beliefs, persuasions, and tastes.

This, of course, is what the Research Department was making available to the Center prior to January 22.

The role of the Research Fellow in this is:

In the atmosphere of creative activity, of conflicting tastes, credos and artistic conception, in the midst of the origination of new aesthetics programs of the future American filmmakers now in existence at the Center and which has been demonstrated by the fruitful result of the past half year, a theorist or historian who loves the medium more than his theories can indeed more fully participate and realize inspiration in his field of research. With the screenings, (899 pictures in the last year) the possibility of working in the program of the Oral Histories, the participation in films on films, or in the publications of the discussions which take place at the Center, the Research Fellows can find a many faceted use of their capabilities in addition to discovering an unending number of interesting stimulants for their own theoretical work. It is necessary to say that for the Fellows whose main interest is either Film Criticism or Film History, the situation is much clearer than that of a pure theorist. There could hardly be a more fruitful climate, more desirable conditions and opportunities for the critics and historians than the Center's.

Such theoretical research should root its investigations as a special institution within the Center. Theory, as it is necessary and as it should be cultivated at the Center, is seen as the generalization of the creative experience, theory as a searchlight for practice, concrete investigation, and the challenging conventions, rules, devices, etc. This, as we see it at this moment, is the function and field of exercise for theoretical research at the Center.

The existing fact that most of the film critics throughout the world cultivate their trade untouched by the reality that there are

80 objective rules of the game, that aesthetical analysis should and must emanate from the work of art itself and not from the onlookers likes or dislikes, from his impressions, biases, prejudices, and assumptions calls for such a confrontation and co-education.

Daniel closed his review of the AFI's new position:

Constitution and development of film criticism as a serious and corroborative cultural activity is unthinkable without a deeper theoretical understanding and practical knowledge of filmmaking basics, the creative process of film-making, film history, and theory. Such an education eliminates and makes ridiculous subjectivistic impressions, infantile, academic or ideological pseudocriticism. The Center for Advanced Film Studies seems to be the best and most vital place for such a conception of theoretical and critical film studies.

All this without a single faculty or staff member of note or competence in the areas of theory, criticism, scholarship, research, or history.

Separated Staff Presentation

Unaware of the preceding, a committee of fired staff and concerned Fellows made its presentation. Jim Kitses outlined problems, priorities, and options in educational and critical terms; Fellow Bob Mundy (one of the editors of the English magazine *Cinema*) spoke for the interests of Research Fellows; Fellow Paul Schrader raised the question of critical standards and the national critical/cultural community; I summarised the oral history progress to date, and urged that a professional film historian be given charge of the programme; Kay Loveland presented a paper on staff-administrative problems. At the conclusion of the presentation, Stevens was asked by the Chairman if he cared to discuss the issues raised; Stevens did not. An attempt on our part to engage the Board in discussion of the issues was rebuffed; the Board preferred to keep its own private council, and thanked us. We were told that the results of their deliberations would be conveyed to us within a week.

Simultaneous reports on the Board meeting were presented by George Stevens, Jr. at Greystone, to Fellows, faculty and staff, in the presence of Gregory Peck and Sidney Barlow; and to the fired staff and Research Fellows group, in a Beverly Hills hotel room, by George Seaton, John Cullin, and Fred Zinnemann. Also present were Kitses, Loveland, Taylor, Schrader, Mundy, Thompson, and Research Fellow Steve Mamber. We were given information which closely followed a letter, 'Notes for committee of Trustees who will meet with former employees on February 8, 1971'. A copy of this document was available to us at that time, and was later quoted from in the press. As the letter well sums up our meeting, here it is:

These points should be made by whomever is the spokesman for the Trustees committee.

1. That the Trustees found the presentation helpful to the process of arriving at certain very important decisions concerning the AFI's future.
2. Many of your proposals coincided with recommendations which had been presented to the Board by the director and staff.
3. Other of your proposals were helpful in clarifying our thinking and decisions.
4. It is clear that the AFI has aspirations far beyond the resources presently available. This has resulted in a staff stretched too thin and the creation of expectations around the country that cannot presently be fulfilled. Much of the meeting was devoted to exploring ways to increase the amount of funds available for AFI.
5. The Board decided to immediately launch a \$250,000 fund-raising effort between now and June to offset the present deficit of the Film Institute and to stem the need to cut back further in AFI's programs in archives, education and filmmaker training.
6. The education committee of the Board chaired by David Mallery met several times throughout the weekend and will work in the next several months to come up with recommendations for consideration by the Board relative to AFI's future thrust in education. The education committee gained approval for a grant to sponsor the first national seminar for directors of regional film teachers organizations. The seminar is designed to explore the feasibility of founding an individual national membership organization which would be affiliated with the AFI and which would be provided with materials developed within the research, archival and production activities of the AFI. Joseph Dispenza was named to take charge of AFI's programs in education.
7. The Board listened to the various viewpoints on the focus of the Center with particular attention to the role of film theory within the Center. It endorsed the approach presented by Professor Daniel: A concentration on theory as 'the generalization of the creative experience, theory as a searchlight for practice, concrete investigation and challenging conventions, rules, devices, etc.' The broader education efforts described in both Daniel's and Kitses's papers must be considered in the larger scope of the AFI's ambitions and possibilities in film education. Much of this is beyond our present funding expectations.

As this concerns the research Fellows, the Board hopes they can find within the program outlined by Professor Daniel a program relevant to their continued study. Professor Daniel will be available to discuss with each research Fellow his individual case. The Board decided that the AFI will be willing to work out a financial arrangement with Jim Kitses so that the research Fellows might have available the continuation of their consultations with him throughout the remainder of this academic year. The AFI would like to resolve

82 within the next two weeks the status of the individual research Fellows.

8. The Board decided that the fact that Jim Kitses and Rick Thompson are in the educational profession should be taken into consideration in terms of their severance, and this will be discussed individually with each of them.

9. The Board is grateful for their concern for the AFI.

The AFI ended up paying Jim Kitses and myself through June 1. Their ruthless economy move ended up in obvious waste; had they played their cards differently, and advised us that as of June, the research programme would be terminated if funds were not found, they could have had four months' more work from us for the same cost.

At the conclusion of this meeting, pressure was put on the Board representatives to disclose their positions on the hard issues at hand. Seaton had to leave; Zinnemann, with extreme honesty and candour, apologised for being ill-informed due to his residence outside the US in recent years, and disqualified himself. Culkin stressed some of the points in the letter, and went on to indicate, in confidence, certain Board attitudes and deadlines of a rather sweeping and decisive nature, which, if true, and if realised, will certainly be seen as improvements by critics of the AFI. However, the Board's unwillingness to take immediate and specific steps, and/or to be publicly candid about AFI matters, was confirmed. At that point, the meeting concluded with the staff/research Fellow group indicating that they had followed the issues as far as they could through the administrative chain of the AFI, to Board level, and would now feel free to raise those issues not yet resolved in more public arenas.

Variety covered these events a week later, on February 16, on its own initiative. The next day, *Variety* carried AFI's side of the story. Stevens is quoted as saying:

'There are some people who feel the Film Institute should not be involved in filmmaking at all, and they are never going to be happy here, because one of the main reasons for AFI's creation was for it to be a progressive force in filmmaking.'

Of current \$2,400,000 budget for the fiscal year ending in June, Stevens maintains approximately \$1,000,000 is for the Center for Advanced Film Studies, other \$1,400,000 for archives, education, publications, and research.

Strangely, none of the money is assigned to production grants — unless they are now incorporated with film-maker training into the Center.

Stevens explained staff problems in the same article:

'There were people who wanted to change the Institute to their vision of what it should be. All organizations have them, but all

organizations don't have as handy and efficient a Xerox machine.'

According to Stevens and a few Board members polled, the Board was unanimous in support of Stevens and the present programme and emphasis.

The same issue of *Daily Variety* contained this letter from Charlton Heston, who entered in the middle of our group's presentation to the Board, yet is willing to generalise about even those portions he missed:

Since I may be in a position to comment with some objectivity on the aims as well as the problems of the AFI, I'd like to point out what I think are distortions as well as some simple errors of fact in the version of recent developments at the Institute as presented to *Daily Variety* by several former employees and reported in yesterday's edition.

I'm a member of the National Council on the Arts, the federal body that originally funded the AFI. I'm not on the Institute's Board of Trustees, but I was asked to join a committee advisory to them and was present at several of the meetings of the trustees last week at which these matters were discussed.

The five separated employees [missing the introduction as he did, Heston was unaware that two of the five were Center Fellows, not employees] you mention in your story were given an opportunity at one of these meetings to present their views. Their statements were extensive, characterized largely by extremely negative evaluations of the AFI's leadership and gloomy predictions of its future if their recommendations were not followed. I'd describe both evaluations and recommendations as apocryphal in character and largely lacking in pragmatic validity. The board, as nearly as I could judge, found their suggestions totally unacceptable.

. . . The industry as a whole is becoming involved in the future of the AFI, in a most specific manner.

In the AFI's vague style, that last 'specific manner' is not specified; it is of particular interest as MPAA at about this time withdrew its support of the AFI.

In *Daily Variety* (February 2, 1971) Kay Loveland responded to the above:

1. None of us has ever said or implied that we 'feel the Film Institute should not be involved in filmmaking at all.' We have said all along that we do not believe film production should consume more than half of AFI's total budget, as it has.
2. We do not want 'to change the Institute to our vision of what it should be.' We have advocated and continue to advocate the *original* vision of AFI as set forth in AFI's first brochure and all subsequent publications.
3. Your statement that 'all organizations don't have as handy and efficient a Xerox machine' implies that we used the AFI machine to

84 duplicate the material we have circulated. As a matter of fact, the machine we used is located at the Postal Instant Press at the corner of Wilshire and Almont, where we paid 5 cents per copy per page. In all we have spent around \$100 on duplicating costs.

4. Mr Heston states that our recommendations were 'largely lacking in pragmatic validity' and that the Board, as nearly as he could judge, 'found our suggestions totally unacceptable.' His view does not seem to agree with the 'Notes for the committee of Trustees who will meet with former employees' which seemed to be the guideline for the meeting we had with John Culkin, George Seaton and Fred Zinnemann on Feb 8. [Here she cites points 1, 2, 3, and 9 of that letter.] It seems strange, if our recommendations had 'no pragmatic validity', that George Seaton would have told us that probably ten of the twelve recommendations made in my Feb 1 statement (which 'coincided with recommendations which had been presented . . . by the director and staff') would be acted on. It also seems strange that John Culkin would have made a similar statement, that Culkin, Benton, Mallery and Zinnemann would have told us individually that our presentation helped to make this Board meeting the best, most thought-provoking that has ever been held, that Arnold Picker would have told me on February 4 that most of the recommendations I had made were things he had been trying to get for years. Surely *they* don't all lack in 'pragmatic validity'.

Research Fellow Paul Schrader became the first Fellow to resign from the Center.

Variety of April 7, 1971, carried the following:

A dispute is raging in the film education community about the two-year \$800,000 grant recently awarded the AFI by the Ford Foundation. According to AFI director George Stevens, Jr, and his staff, the Ford funds are earmarked for the Coast-based training center, and can't be used for education and research, no matter how much it might be desirable to do so. Therefore, it is claimed, the Institute's emphasis on production at the expense of its other mandated activities is strictly a consequence of the conditions attached to presently available funds.

This is contradicted by McNeil Lowry of Ford, who says that the grant was based on a budget for the training center which included the education, research and critical studies faculty members who were fired. Lowry says that he has asked Stevens to clarify the matter publicly, which he has not yet done. He declines to say whether the grant would be rescinded if all budgeted activities are not restored to the Center.

In the same issue, AFI revealed its new approach to education: The executive board of the AFI, meeting in New York today, will consider a proposal to form and finance a national organization of

film teachers – a group which would substitute for the AFI itself in the field of grass-roots education.

Under the plan, formulated by a committee of board members, the Institute would give \$40,000 a year for two years to a new group – largely a federation of sixteen extant regional groups, with some 5,000 film teachers as members. AFI itself would discontinue its efforts on the local level, and would restrict itself to surveys and other research in the field, which it would make available to its new affiliate.

. . . Some critics, however, are likely to keep a close watch on the Institute budget to make sure that the new plan doesn't make educational work a stepchild to other AFI activities, notably production and filmmaker training.

Given AFI's budget secrecy, such scrutiny is impossible.

However, *Variety* of April 14, 1971, carried this item, quoted in its entirety:

The executive board of the AFI, at its meeting in New York last Wednesday, tabled a proposal to form and finance a national organization of film teachers. Board reportedly spent the bulk of its time talking about the Institute's current fund-raising problem. Apparently no mention was made of the request by the Ford Foundation to restore education and research faculties at the Center of Advanced Film Studies on the Coast. The \$400,000 due from Ford for the first year of its current grant will not be forthcoming until the money is matched by outside contributions. An expected larger grant from the National Council on the Arts would not be issued until after the Council's meeting at the end of next month. [The grant has not yet been given.]

At the foot of a story announcing newly commissioned oral histories, *Variety* of May 5 noted:

Such reports had reached the ears of the Ford Foundation, which had awarded an \$800,000 two-year grant to the Center on the basis of a budget which included research activities. It is now presumed that Stevens has now clarified the situation to the Foundation's satisfaction.

But, in AFI style, not publicly.

Improved Staff Relations

As far as improvement in staff relations goes, the AFI did finally actually enrol in the California State Unemployment Insurance programme, as it had falsely claimed to have done twice before. However, on Friday, May 21, Judy Morris, receptionist at the Center since its opening, was fired by David Lunney without warning, on charges of lateness. She had just returned the week before from a European vacation; during the week in question, she was not late.

86 Several other AFI staff members, at all levels, were late during that week. Miss Morris had received no specific warning that her job was in jeopardy. She had been vocal in the staff meetings over Marie Fitch's firing. Robert Mundy and Cary Gliberman, Fellows' representatives to the faculty meetings, were the only members of the Center community to raise an outcry. They sent a letter to George Stevens, covering the facts of the case, including Judy's extremely helpful relationship with Fellows – typing scripts for free, and so on – and asked for clarification.

Outcry

Prescott J. Wright, veteran independent film distributor, concisely hit several issues on the head in his letter of protest to the Board of Trustees, of January 1, 1971:

. . . it represents what we have suspected and feared; that Education and Research warrant the lowest priorities in the current directions of the Institute.

None of us has escaped the economic pressures of these days and if this is the rationale for reducing the Education Department to three [actually two] people and cutting off the Research Department, then one wonders how the situation was allowed to deteriorate. Surely the nature of the financial support of the Institute calls for better management and foresight on the part of the directing bodies.

If it is the intention of the AFI to vacate the field of film education and to focus on production training then it should do so honestly and openly. Other bodies can then pick up this work and the concomitant funding.

Wright had served the AFI as a distribution consultant.

Austin Lamont, publisher of *Film Comment*, received a budget summary of AFI – but hardly a complete one, as it did not include the figures for the Director's salary, which is believed to be around \$70,000 per year. Lamont notes that administration and staff salaries, at \$1,367,038, are greater than the sum dispersed in grants and projects, at \$1,316,927.

Here are a few other figures: consultants and their travel, \$134,534; rent, \$138,009; and a 'benefit' for the AFI – which lost \$31,953.

These figures cover the first three years of AFI operation. The editorial concludes:

Here are a few specific ideas, framed after I talked with dozens of film people around the country, including AFI administration, staff, and former staff members:

- 1) Film Education, one of the principal needs of this country, is getting short shrift at the AFI. Film educators – critics, scholars and teachers – are not adequately represented on the AFI Board of

Trustees. The educators should elect their own full-voting representatives to the AFI Board.

2) The Trustees should evaluate the Institute's policies and priorities, particularly with respect to its accomplishments as 'a catalyst and point of focus and coordination;' and they should establish and make public a new set of priorities with clearly defined goals and realistic budgets, and with waste, overhead, administrative costs, salaries and frills cut to the core.

3) The Trustees should evaluate the past performance and present attitude of the Institute's administration – its management techniques, its relationship to the film community, and its commitment to the goals of the AFI. Present administration should be replaced and the internal structure of the AFI changed, if necessary, to insure the free flow of recommendations between the AFI administration, the AFI staff and the film community.

Late in May, the Society for Cinema Studies (an organisation made up of college and university teachers, film scholars, critics and archivists) distributed:

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE AMERICAN FILM INSTITUTE

The Society for Cinema Studies strongly supports the continuation and strengthening the American Film Institute. Its work of preserving, cataloguing, and exhibiting our film heritage is of utmost value. At the same time we deeply regret a reaction to financial stress that has caused elimination of the research and continuing dismantling of the education departments. Our primary concern being the building of an enlightened and discriminating audience, the activities of research and education are to us at least equally important as any other functions of an American Film Institute. We urge that they be restored to a parity in terms of budget and staff.

Conceiving ourselves as constituents of what should be thought of as a national public undertaking (as individuals we are being solicited to become members of the AFI), we ask that the Board of Trustees be responsible to the total film community, including the scholarly, critical and educational segments. We ask that the management of the American Film Institute be held accountable to the Board for all executive actions which do in fact relate to the policies and priorities of the Institute's program.

Specifically we ask that the Board of Trustees:

- 1) Review the policies and priorities of the American Film Institute and make a clear public re-statement regarding them which all can understand and refer to and to which management can be held accountable.
- 2) Consider the capabilities of the present management to implement these goals; remove, realign and add executive

personnel if necessary to insure that the full work of an American Film Institute progresses according to stated objectives and appropriate calendar.

3) Publish annually a financial accounting of the American Film Institute's income and expenditures so that all concerned can judge how the total resources are being allocated.

4) Make certain that the scholarly, critical and educational film community is adequately represented on the Board of Trustees, and provide some mechanism by which the members of that community can help choose who will represent them.

These requests are made respectfully and for what we sincerely believe to be the best interests not only of the American Film Institute but of the whole cultural and educational life of this nation.

May 1971

Early in June, the AFI circulated a pre-release draft of George Stevens, Jr.'s response to the Austin Lamont editorial: 'A Response from the American Film Institute':

The American Film Institute is an educational institution. Everything the AFI does serves education in a number of ways. The Archive program has galvanized a national effort to preserve films so that they might survive for scholars to study and for new generations to view. Filmmakers are being educated and supported at the same time that work is being done to expand the use of films in education and, today, far from being 'eliminated,' thirty-six AFI-supported researchers and scholars are gathering history and data. We believe that film education relates not only to the growing community of film educators, but also to the artists and the audiences who sustain the art. In this light, everything the Institute engages in can be seen as educational.

The American Film Institute, nevertheless, is probably not as good as those of us who work for it think it is, nor as bad as its antagonists would like to portray it. It is perhaps closer to the picture seen by objective observers and critics – that of any unusually productive four-year-old with some triumphs and some mistakes. Yet most criticism of this four-year-old questions not the *quality* of accomplishment, but the *quantity* of work in one area or another. Constructive debate can center around these questions of emphasis, the more so if polemics and misstatements are put aside. Look closely at AFI's trustees and you will find a serious group of people who brought it into existence, made human judgments in matters of program, priorities and personnel, and raised three-quarters of its total funding from private sources. Having made that effort, they have been vigilant to prevent careless spending. Perhaps this Board would be strengthened by more educators and critics, but Arthur Knight, John Culkin and David Mallery have spoken forcefully for education since AFI's founding, the latter two

as members of the Executive Committee. Yet no Board members have spoken for a single interest. New trustees or visitors to Board meetings are invariably surprised to see the depth of interest and commitment executives and actors hold for film preservation and film study in the schools. And, less surprisingly, the educators have found value in the study center in California. This mixture of interests is basic to AFI's unique thrust and is its strength – disparate elements of the film community joined by a shared concern for the art of film. The executives and prominent artists are there partly because they can help make it all happen, but to limit them to the size of their influence is a mistake, so too to confine Ed Emshwiller, Ricky Leacock, Francis Coppola and Arthur Penn to a narrow interest in filmmaking.

Film Comment offered 750 words and twenty-four hours to broad and scattered charges. A complete report on AFI's first four years will be issued in July. *Film Comment* readers may write AFI for a copy. It will contain a complete listing of all activities, all individuals and projects assisted by the Institute, audited financial data, and evaluations of the problems and challenges ahead. Meanwhile, be assured that research is not eliminated, it is stronger than ever; that the 'staff salaries' to 'projects and grants' ratio represents no incredible disparity – AFI is not a foundation, but an operating team consisting of cataloguers, librarians, projectionists, archivists, faculty, theatre personnel, educators, accountants, as well as the secretaries who do all the work. (The British Film Institute expends the equivalent of 80 percent of its government support for staff.) The report will detail 5,000 American films safeguarded; five summer seminars for film teachers; grants for eighty-six independent filmmakers; annual published surveys of university film courses; a definitive 1635-page Catalog of films of the twenties (the first of nineteen volumes); the funding of twenty-two oral history projects; a film repertory theatre; twenty-seven internships for filmmakers; support for *Filmfacts* magazine (still struggling); the founding of the Community Film Workshop Council; a weekly educational television program; scholarships, fellowships; model film education sites; subsidies for film co-op catalogs; and an advanced conservatory where filmmakers learn artistic craft and discipline, and where theory and history are being compiled and refined.

This is only a part of what we would have liked to do in those four years. But it has been achieved through the creation of a structure which has encouraged concerted action from previously fragmented sectors of the film community. This is a big country, and we are still a small organization. If you want to help and be involved, write to me and we will look for a way.

While it may be true that the BFI expends the equivalent of 80 per cent of its government support for staff, this is not at all

clear to me from the *BFI Annual Report and Accounts 1970*. Budget reports, of course, are not necessarily organised for clarity. One AFI budget report which Kahlenberg has appraised as reasonably accurate, and representative of the same ratios of allocation for fourth-year spending, listed:

Archives	...	...	...	...	\$1,000,000
Education	...	...	...	...	400,000
Research and Publications	...	...	...	...	450,000
AFI Theatre	...	...	...	...	240,000
Production Grants	...	...	...	...	1,350,000
Center	...	...	...	...	2,100,000
Administration	...	...	...	...	1,000,000
Total	...	...	...	...	\$6,540,000

When I asked Kahlenberg why 'Research and Publications' was so large for a staff of three for eighteen months, with no budget (beyond the \$150,000 Mayer grant, which is probably figured into the total, thus accounting with staff for \$200,000 tops), he indicated that the figure included AFI's promotional brochures as well. Not that they were mentioned in AFI's structural plans when 'Publications' were itemised. That yields a figure of \$250,000 for, presumably, promotional material, plus a subsidy to *Filmfacts* and an unspecified grant to *Filmmaker's Newsletter*. It is also possible that, in Hollywood studio fashion, a portion of Center overhead may be invisibly bolstering some budgets. During the first year of Center operation, when the Research Department consisted of a staff of three, one and a half Research Fellows, and two rooms in the mansion, the Center officer then preparing budgets told me that Research Department was carrying 23 per cent of the Center overhead. I do not know how long this condition persisted. At any rate, it would be most helpful if AFI's published budget data were detailed, explicit, and complete, without room for ambiguity.

IV. IN CONCLUSION

Variety, June 2, 1971, carried a story on the Society for Cinema Studies letter, with the comment:

Though Institute director George Stevens thus far has failed to issue a public clarification of budgetary priorities, he has consistently denied that the AFI's education and research departments are being down-graded. Rather, he's blamed a recent wave of firings and resignations in those areas on differences of opinion on how the jobs should be done.

Stevens points to a recent series of research grants and to a reassessment of the AFI's film-education role by a special committee of the board as evidence of an continuing commitment.

As of March 27, 1971, this 'reassessment . . . by a special committee of the board', the Education Committee of Mallery,

Culkin, Knight, and Benton, had not yet been finished or distributed, though it was begun in early February. Also, note the emergence of yet another reason for the firings: though first simply attributed to required budgetary trims, they are now the result of differences of opinion on how the jobs should be done. Shifty, but fair enough; however, the fact that those jobs have not yet been refilled casts doubt on this explanation.

Stevens is correct enough in citing the on-going work of the Mayer oral history project. However, his attempts to use this single programme to masquerade as the entire Research effort is strained. *Variety* (May 5, 1971) carries such an attempt:

Reports that research activities are reduced or eliminated at the Center are completely untrue, Stevens asserted.

In fact, whether Stevens is willing to recognise it or not, the firings of all Research staff in January abruptly terminated the following Research activities, which have not been resumed or replaced:

1. Jim Kitses's final draft writing of his AFI book on last year's summer seminar, which had just reached final rough draft when he was fired.
2. A collection of close studies in visual analysis methods, which had been initiated by staff and Fellows of the Department.
3. A collaborative study of the Warners school of animation, for which screenings and writing had begun (indeed, the firings occurred during the third of the weekly screenings, and terminated the series prematurely).
4. The establishment of a project to pool, circulate and encourage the execution of translations of film material in foreign languages for which English translations are currently unavailable on a large scale.
5. Meaningful tutorial relationships between Research Fellows and critical faculty. Research Fellows are unanimous in asserting that AFI's total current utility for them since the firings is in the screening of films, certainly an advantage, but a far cry from the vigorous dialogue that had taken root prior to January 22.
6. Support of Research Auditors, who were to begin their stay at AFI the Monday following the firings, who have received only token support in the form of screenings – certainly not the participation in an active community they had been led to believe was available.
7. Distribution by the Department of bibliographies and supportive duplicated material relative to the weekly screening programme topics – which topics, it seems, have also been discontinued since the demise of the Research Department, who arranged them.
8. Weekly critical seminars of substance, prepared for by screenings, readings, and presentations worked up by individual Fellows and staff, conducted on a rigorous level of close discussion.

9. General input to the Center culture of solid critical and scholarly content. Certainly no one currently at the Center is significantly involved in creating, or even following, film criticism and culture, beyond film-making activities and the screening of some current new films. The Center library, as a result of the Research staff firings, has shelved plans for acquiring major foreign language journals, such as backruns of *Cahiers du Cinema*, obviously because there is no one to use them.
10. The 'research into the language of cinema' originally envisioned in the Center outline as a research activity, has stopped short.
11. Several individual monographs and book-length projects were suddenly deprived of all but screening support.

In a larger context, since the AFI's inception, it seems that the only programmes cancelled or discontinued have been in the areas of education, publications, and research (this is not widely known because the AFI, while publicising extensively the initiation of programmes, never publicly announces terminations). Production, AFI Theatre, Film-maker Training, and Archives have remained intact, if perhaps reduced in funding, while the following programmes in Education and Publications have been dropped:

1. Film Information Office
2. Model Sites funding
3. Regional Screenings programme
4. *American Film* magazine
5. Films-on-film
6. Grants to graduate scholars
7. Distribution of curriculum documents in Xerox form
8. Separate Education Department Newsletter (now incorporated in the monthly *AFI Report* promotional pamphlet, much reduced in length)
9. Research Department (see above)

It seems quite clear from this that Film-maker Training, Production, the Theatre, and Archives have received solid support, and that Education, Publications, and Research have been considered in *obvious practice* more expendable and of lower priority.

The AFI has done very well in the areas of archives and preservation, film-maker grants, and probably, on a purely technical level, film-maker training. These are concrete, quantifiable areas of activity, easily fitted into AFI management's product-and-production orientated thinking. Behind this stupid administrator's positivism are two key conceptual sets. The first is AFI's frequent rhetorical polarisation of film-making on one end of the scale, and criticism and scholarship on the other. The alternative formulation, which one would have thought more useful for AFI, sees film-making, teaching, criticism – all flowing from a common centre, the film itself – as object and idea. However, the AFI prefers to separate

these elements as much as possible, and to underemphasise or ignore the role of ideas and disciplines.

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The second conceptual problem is also dichotomous. The AFI operates the technical and concrete group of its programmes actively, as works; while it operates the intellectual and educational group of programmes passively, as organization and administration. The AFI's major failure to date does not lie in what it has done, but in what it hasn't done – indeed, hasn't even conceived of. *The AFI's education effort has been responsive, rather than initiative; consequently, it has been limited by the boundaries and deficiencies of the field to which it responds. Its service activities have been of value, but they have also dragged down activities in other areas – creative rather than data-orientated material, dialogue, criticism, ideas, educational and critical works of substance. This reflects a trend in the US film education movement at large – mainly a secondary school movement – which, responding to reductive interpretations of McLuhan, plunged into organising teacher networks and circulating information. These activities very quickly outstripped whatever conceptual base the movement had and left it without a core. This imbalance is laboriously being corrected without much AFI help.*

With the single exception of Archives, the results of which are available only to a very, very few, the AFI has focused the great majority of its financial and staff resources on seventy-five filmmaker grant recipients, thirty intern trainees, and perhaps sixty Fellows and Auditors of the Center for Advanced Film Study, while serving the much larger constituencies of film scholars, teachers, students, and the interested public with promotional material, lists of college film courses, teachers' addresses, and little else.

Under the Archives programme, the AFI has put up a good filmography project – the National Film Catalog – but has failed to fill equally pressing needs in the areas of bibliography, translation, the clearing house for project listings called for by Toeplitz, or ground work in television history and aesthetics. It's even more irritating when one realises how much further funds go in education, research, scholarship, even publications,* than in the costly area of film production.

In response to my request for an interview, and a subsequent letter listing specific information I desired, Richard Kahlenberg, Assistant Director of the AFI for Planning, met with me. Much of the data I sought was budgetary – breakdowns of costs for various programmes, salaries, Center cost and overhead. While not refusing to answer these questions, Kahlenberg did not bring such information, and indicated that he did not know these budgetary specifics.

Kahlenberg advanced the new *Discussions* series as a useful publication, and a broadly distributed product of the Center. The first *Discussion* pamphlet is priced at \$1.00 and contains thirteen small pages of chopped-up press conference transcript, most of it

available in numerous other Fellini interviews; Fellini's appearance at the Center, which provided the transcript, was simple promotion (see Rick Setlowe's story, *Variety* [January 21, 1970], lead paragraph). The second *Discussion* is with Rouben Mamoulian, and is nearly a mirror image of Robinson's 1961 *Sight and Sound* interview. When I challenged that such duplicatory and lazily-conceived efforts were wasteful, Kahlenberg replied that if even one new fact gained circulation through the *Discussions* series, it was worth it. This attitude is one of the AFI's most dangerous, because it is used to excuse lack of decent preparation and execution, resulting in wasted time, effort, materials, and opportunities. Reasonable preparation could assure that many new facts would certainly gain circulation – but this preparation is not undertaken, partially because the AFI has no personnel resources in this area. This is one of many examples of the AFI's inability to comprehend the cross-over points of raw, factual data with critical method and experience. Another misconception is that the collection of oral history interviews, some good, some mediocre, constitutes a research and critical studies programme; this parallels the reductive notions that history is simply names and dates, and that education is the transmission of information.

Such large and small conceptual failures (linked with management and Trustees very one-sidedly weighted toward production thinking; as well as interlocking Board members shared by AFI, its parent agency, and subsequent funding agencies – which might be thought to supervise it – have left the AFI in a questionable condition.

7.6 million dollars have been spent, but not accounted for, of public, foundation, and private funds. For this investment we have received a good archive; a useful National Film Catalog; a Center for Advanced Film Study, which has given us ten short films or so, will give us a feature film, but has been unable as an experimental educational project to give us an account of itself, to turn its activities and enormous cost – probably over \$2 million – into any material or method of value to others in the field; promotional publications; a token education effort, pitched at the lowest viable level of activity and ambition; and a National Film Theatre which shows films in Washington, DC, at the deficit cost of at least \$100,000 per year (this theatre is often described by the AFI as a Cinematheque, but its programming is on the popular side of NFT, and its influence on American film writing and thought almost nil).

The AFI has often counter-punched critics by accusing them of trying to destroy the AFI, certainly a grim prospect; if the AFI goes down, so do the chances for a film institute here for some time to come. However, any viable public service orientated institution should be able to stand open scrutiny and discussion. The possibility that the AFI can be killed from within should not be discounted either.

I have quoted remedial proposals from other groups earlier. Certainly, the AFI's absolutely closed decision-making process must be opened up; and a national dialogue must be conducted, by all concerned with the AFI, to redirect its efforts. While Kahlenberg agreed with my evaluation of American film culture as being in desperate need of aid, he indicated that the AFI had no particular idea of how to go about aiding it, beyond current AFI programmes. That makes it absolutely clear that the AFI needs administrators who do have some idea of how to go about it.

Anti-intellectualism must be rooted out of the AFI and replaced by a creative and constructive comprehension of the broadest uses of education, criticism, and scholarship.

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Dear Sir,

Thank you very much for sending me the Special Number devoted to that ultimate creator and artist, Douglas Sirk. I am reading with much interest and appreciation the various discerning articles which so succinctly describe the Sirk touch and show recognition to that hitherto unappreciated director.

While to this writer-director-producer, Sirk is unsurpassed in his field, even by the great Orson Welles, to whom I also bow low in homage and respect, I beg leave to find one fault in your article: one reading same would think that Sirk is solely responsible for the production of such films as *Tarnished Angels* and *Written on the Wind*.

No credit is really ascribed to the basic source material provided by the novels of those great American novelists, William Faulkner and Robert Wilder.

Actually both films were created (based on the novels) by a triumvirate of George Zuckerman (who wrote the screenplays for me and with me), Douglas Sirk and myself. We made these films like three fingers in one glove in perfect harmony, one building upon the others' ideas and inspirations. Douglas would undoubtedly be the first to tell you that many of the things you give him sole credit for were either contained in the script George and I created or were ideas of mine imparted to Sirk, one creator building on the other, out of his experience and imagination. Much was done to enhance these previously unsolvable films in the editing by Russ Schoengarth, under my close supervision and, of course, with Douglas' beautiful perception and understanding. But the flavor of the newspaper city room, for example, is pure unadulterated Zuckerman and Zugsmith from their many years in the city room of the Atlantic City *Daily World* as reporter and editor.

While Sirk undoubtedly took the Zugsmithsonian philosophy of motion picture making to heights reached only by Orson Welles and more artistically than even Jack Arnold (*The Incredible Shrinking Man*) or Alfred E. Green (*Invasion USA*) or director Zugsmith (Thomas de Quincey's *Confessions of an Opium Eater*), you should not have ignored producer Zugsmith's part in the creativity of the Sirk-directed *Written on the Wind* and *Tarnished Angels*.

Take a look at Zugsmith's *Touch of Evil* or *The Big Operator* or *High School Confidential* to see what I mean. They were directed

by Orson Welles, Jack Arnold and Charles Haas. But they have the Zugsmith philosophy and structure.

Other trail-blazing Zugsmith-produced films like the Russ Meyer-directed *Fanny Hill*, which we were not allowed to make in merrie old England, or the Zugsmith-directed *Sappho*, *Darling* impart the forward-reaching philosophy that is peculiar to Zugsmith and enhanced by the truly magnificent Sirk.

God bless him. And you, too, for recognizing him.

And pardon me for wanting my own due.

Thanks, again, and best wishes,

Albert Zugsmith

5 August 1971

Dear Mr Rohdie,

This letter of thanks for sending me Screen's issue on my films is very much overdue. The only excuse I can offer is having been absent from home for quite a long while.

Now, I have been going through the various essays (rather objectively, I believe) from your own excellent Editorial and Mr Elsaesser's well-translated Documentation and Postscript, to the very knowledgeable articles by Paul Willemsen and Dave Grosz – not to forget Fred Camper's amazingly detailed and acute accounts of some of my pictures. I found them not only quite absorbing to read, but also of a surprising insight into the crannies and shadowed layers of that certainly often paradoxical work of mine. At the same time, I feel, the issue presents itself because of some contrasting shades of opinion and method as a fair example of a process of thinking in contradictions.

I know your discerning Editorial expresses some uneasiness in respect to a certain gap between principle and practice, the latter lacking, you seem to point out, in methodological harmony.

You are quite right, I guess. But may I quote from Mao: 'From the standpoint of Dialectical Materialism,' he says, 'contradictions exist in all processes that occur both in objective manifestations and in subjective thinking. The contest of contradictions goes on uninterruptedly. They are permeating every process from beginning to end. This constitutes the absoluteness and general validity of contradictions.'

Now, this is mainly politically applicable. Still, as in all of Mao's thinking, it is valid, too, in the cultural sphere and your issue is certainly a not unworthy contribution, I feel, to such a dialectical process.

But I notice I'm beginning to get into something I wanted to keep away from: into commenting upon criticism concerning my own work – if only by resorting to quoting others.

A film-maker ought to be stingy with words, for his craft still springs from pictures; so let this be a mere letter of thanks for so

much time, space, care and critical thoroughness expended on the various aspects of my time and my films.

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I hope to be able to come to London, later this year, and I would be very happy indeed to meet you, and some of those gifted contributors to Screen.

Yours sincerely and gratefully,

Douglas Sirk

August 1971

Dear Screen,

I feel I should write to inform readers of several unfortunate errors in the last number (Vol 12, No 2).

1. On p 117: the material which appears in note 6 to D. Grosz's article is not a correct quotation from my forthcoming book of interviews, *Sirk on Sirk*, as is alleged; it may be clear from the text as it is printed that it has become garbled (there is a clear break in the text after line 1), but I would also like to stress that the phrase about the Jesuits in line 3 is quite incorrect, and does not occur in *Sirk on Sirk*; this error in transcription is most regrettable.

2. On p 118: the list of films under the title of 'filmography' contains several mistakes and omissions.

Sirk's three Ufa shorts, made in 1934-35, should be entered: *Der eingebildete Kranke* (*The Imaginary Invalid*); *Dreimal Liebe* (*Three x Love*); one title unknown.

His first feature: *'T was één April* (Dutch version of *April April*); *La Chanson du Souvenir* is a French language re-make of *Das Hofkonzert*.

For the sake of completeness, the filmography should record that in between Germany and the USA, Sirk supervised *Accord Final* (1939) and directed *Boefje* (1939), the first in France and Switzerland, the second in Holland.

In the American period: Sirk almost certainly did not do any direction on *Siren of Atlantis*; I have yet to see any conclusive proof that John Brahm worked on the film, either, as is frequently alleged. *Shockproof* was made after *Slightly French* (although released before it). In the same year, Sirk probably also did some work on *Lulu Belle* (credited to Leslie Fenton); as he did in 1955-56 on *Never Say Goodbye* (credited to Jerry Hopper). Both *Battle Hymn* and *Interlude* were made in 1956 (not 1957). *Thunder on the Hill* (shot in 1950) is titled *Bonaventure* in Britain.

3. I would not like readers to be misled on one minor point: the letter on pp 19-20 will not appear *in toto* in *Sirk on Sirk*, as indicated on p 20.

4. Since all the 16mm copies of Sirk's films in Britain have just been withdrawn, without any official action from the BFI though it was aware of the withdrawal of these prints, I would like to appeal

to all readers: (a) to let me know of any copies of Sirk's films *anywhere*, and to exercise maximum vigilance to ensure their preservation; (b) to let me know if there are any copies in existence of the following: Sirk's early shorts; either version of *April April* or *Hofkonzert*; *Accord Final* (which was distributed in England under this title). Lastly, I would be grateful if anyone could supply me with the credits on the three shorts and on *Accord Final*.

Jon Halliday

[Editor's Note: The lack of action on the part of the BFI is remarkable since the BFI archive holds one Sirk film in all — a single 35mm print of *A Time to Love and a Time to Die*.]

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Robin Wood and the Structural Critics
from John C. Murray

As the dispute between Robin Wood and Alan Lovell¹ seems destined to run a rather fulsome course, there might be some value in drawing back and examining the nature of the disagreements between them. The airing of rival critical tenets and procedures is a unique enough event to warrant a comment or two, but more important still an analysis of what has been said in Lovell's first article and Wood's reply to it might serve to demonstrate certain fundamental weaknesses in the sort of case the structuralists are wanting to argue. So what follows is by way of a recapitulation of the burden of Lovell's attack (I trust he sees it as an accurate one), of Wood's response, and an investigation of the logical positions occupied by both critics drawn largely from John Casey's important work *The Language of Criticism*.²

Lovell's argument was that Wood's criticism lacks 'an analytical and evaluative apparatus' and that, as a consequence, his acts of interpretation and evaluation become matters of unsubstantiated assertion. Further, this being the case, any critical disagreements with Wood must be conducted at the level of 'rival assertions'. He took as an instance of this Wood's attack on Zinnemann's *High Noon*, a film which Wood variously described as 'reeking of contrivance', 'lacking inner logic', 'shallow and external', and 'a cliché'. This sort of attack, Lovell argued,

. . . would hardly persuade somebody who thought *High Noon* a good film. It is no more than a mixture of abuse and assertion.³

Critical agreement with such a judgment, Lovell claims, would be possible only if there were some common experience between critic and reader — 'a shared, stable system of beliefs and values'. The person disagreeing with Wood's judgment on *High Noon* could well be in that position because he had a different system of beliefs and values.

Essentially, Lovell's attack on Wood's criticism can be reduced to this: that, as Wood never states his 'fundamental assumptions about works of art' nor applies any critical method other than that which could be described as the critic being 'a more sensitive and knowledgeable common reader', there is no logical basis for his

arguments. They are subjectively based and dogmatically asserted. In place of this, Lovell argued a case for structural criticism – an interpretative, descriptive method which seeks to establish the basic features of key directors' works:

The assumption behind this principle is that any director creates his films on the basis of a central structure and that all of his films can be seen as variations or developments of it.⁴

A corollary of this method is that it avoids questions of value. As such matters reduce themselves eventually to assertions, criticism should concern itself with describing the form and meaning of a particular director's films as coherently as possible, leaving the evaluation of the films till a later stage.

In my account of Penn's films I have tried to describe how they work rather than to evaluate them. This description might lead at a later date to an evaluation of Penn's work . . . but it will have more force if we can first agree on a description of his work. . . . Critics should always be aware that for the moment all they can hope to do is clear the ground. Dogmatic interpretations and assertions of value can only hinder this work.⁵

So much for the recapitulation then. There seem to be three major elements in Lovell's argument which bear close examination:

- (a) the maintaining of a clear distinction between a critical description and a critical evaluation,
- (b) that evaluations not conducted on a deductive model must therefore be subjective, dogmatic and assertive,
- (c) the belief that the recurrence of a common form (a basic structure) can supply an explanation for the meaning of a given director's films.

Description and Evaluation

The descriptive and evaluative use of language is a matter touched on many times in *The Language of Criticism*, and broadly what Casey has to say is this:

The meaning of a given use of language is a function of that language; it is determined by the purposes to which the language is being put. Meaning, that is, is dependent on contexts. Two different descriptions are not two ways of seeing the same object, but rather do the descriptions allow us to discuss what objects the descriptions refer to. Two different descriptions can be held to refer to the *same* object only if one description can be replaced by the other without gain or loss. Casey takes the instance of describing an object as 'a table' or as 'particles in motion'. If the descriptions have the same function, then one could be replaced by the other. But, he argues, there is very little opportunity for replacement. The 'table' description serves to distinguish this object from chairs and divans. The 'particles in motion' description serves to relate the object in

a particular way to other phenomena, and to bring it under certain general laws. Each description has meaning only in terms of different sorts of discourse.

Casey takes the issue further and suggests that the object given in each of these cases is the 'intensional' object of the form of discourse being conducted. The object is 'seen as . . .' in relation to an appropriate context. In taking the object as 'a table', I justify the description in relation to a specific context – one perhaps in which I am buying furniture for a new home. The intensional object in this case is 'table'. To use the description 'particles in motion', I justify it in a context in which I am discussing the common characteristics of all solids. The intensional object in *that* discourse is 'particles in motion'. The form of discourse determines the appropriateness of the description, and my giving of a description indicates the circumstances under which I 'see' the object. The description has a meaning within a particular context, and is a criterion of the sort of context into which I am fitting the description.

It is this form of reasoning which enables us to draw distinctions between descriptive statements and evaluative statements – or, putting it more accurately, between statements having an evaluative meaning and those not having an evaluative meaning. To say 'This clock keeps ultra-accurate time' has an evaluative meaning if it is uttered in circumstances which appropriately make it a value-judgment (I am deciding whether to buy this clock rather than that one) and where accuracy is held to be a criterion of value. In addition, my giving the description an evaluative function (as I would if I were persuading someone to buy this clock rather than that one) implies that I hold accuracy of timekeeping to be valuable, rather than, say, a beautiful appearance.

We are now in a position to see some of the confusions which mark Alan Lovell's argument. The descriptions he gives of Arthur Penn's films (which differ from those given of the same films by Robin Wood) are offered as items in a particular form of discourse – one in which they are to have no evaluative force.

My use [of the auteur principle] would be exclusively on the basis of thematic resemblances, and would totally ignore questions of quality.⁶

In much the same way as Iona and Peter Opie's *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren* described certain resemblances between children's play rhymes and games in various areas and countries, so, it would seem, Lovell is going to describe resemblances in the films of certain directors. If this form of discourse had been sustained then there would have been no occasion for controversy between Lovell and Wood, any more than there would be one between an horologist's description of the accuracy of a clock, and

a salesman's citing of a clock's accuracy as a good reason for buying it. But the discourse is *not* sustained in this form, nor could it have been.

In what context is Lovell giving his descriptions, under what circumstances? In an article 'Robin Wood – A *Dissenting View*', the burden of which is to disagree with Wood's *evaluation* of particular films and directors, and which concludes with:

The method leads me to very different conclusions about Penn's work than Robin Wood's and readers might estimate the worth of the two methods by comparing my account of Penn and seeing which they find more satisfactory.⁷

On one hand Lovell is speaking as though the intensional objects of his 'seeing' were different from the intensional objects of Wood's 'seeing' (or at least that it is the initial logic of his position – 'my use of the auteur principle would be exclusively on the basis of thematic resemblances . . .'), yet the last quotation implies that he *is* seeing the films and directors under the same circumstances as Wood – as 'objects' to be valued. This being the case – that he is engaged in the same form of discourse as Wood – the issue then becomes one of the critical appropriateness or usefulness of the structural criticism Lovell is setting up in opposition to Wood's tenets and procedures.

Structural Criticism

In general terms, the structuralists' argument is that the significance of any given films by the one director lies in the recurrence of particular themes, archetypes or antinomies in those films. Peter Wollen, for example, speaks at one point⁸ of the presence in fairy tales and myths of pairs of opposites. The difference between the prince and the goose-girl can be reduced to antinomic pairs – male versus female, high versus low. Similarly, antinomic pairs can be found in genre films at a more complex level. As an instance, the films of John Ford reveal pairs of opposites: garden versus wilderness, ploughshare versus sabre, settler versus nomad, civilised versus savage, book versus gun, East versus West. It is Wollen's suggestion that the particular ways in which the opposites are worked out in Ford's films – 'the shifting relationships between antinomies' – give his films their richness and quality. That is, (a) it is the presence in the corpus of Ford's work of an overall pattern of opposites which defines him as a significant director, and (b) it is the complexity with which these patterns are organised which distinguishes Ford from other directors and which characterises him as an artist.

My own view is that Ford's work is much richer than that of Hawks and that this is revealed by structural analysis; it is the richness of the shifting relationship between antinomies in Ford's

These words show that Wollen is much less equivocal than Alan Lovell about the form of discourse into which he is fitting his descriptions. Structural criticism is an evaluative procedure, not one which is primarily descriptive and which, at some later stage, can be used evaluatively.

Before discussing the very substantial difficulties in the structuralists' position, it is worth noting that analyses like those of Lovell, Wollen and Jim Kitses could be of use to critics. They might indicate, for example, that the possibility of a symbolic dimension of meaning exists in Westerns; they might establish new thematic links between apparently unrelated groups of films. To this extent, Alan Lovell's emphasis on the descriptive nature of his analyses is appropriate and sensible. He wants to have 'a much better sense of the nature and limitations of the art'. And with that sort of sentiment there can be little disagreement.

But the weakness of the structuralists' case lies in the argument that the significance of a film or body of films is established by deduction from the principle that certain structures, archetypes or antinomies – of which the films are instances – have a prior significance. When Jim Kitses speaks of the need for 'systematic evaluation' or Alan Lovell of the importance of 'a critical apparatus', the nature of their writing indicates that it is a deductive model that they have in mind. At one stage of his discussion on the auteur theory, Peter Wollen says:

It [the structural approach] throws a completely new light on a film like *Wings of Eagles* which revolves around . . . the vagrancy versus home antinomy, with the difference that when the hero does come home . . . he trips over a child's toy, falls down the stairs and is completely paralysed. . . . This is the macabre *reductio ad absurdum* of the settled.¹⁰

That is, whatever peripheral meanings might be attached to the sequence, its *real* significance lies in its enacting of an antinomy – and *that* sort of judgment is predicated on the principle that antinomies grant meaning and significance to the works which instantiate them.

The difficulty in this position is well summed up in John Casey's assessment of the work of Northrop Frye (a scholar mentioned in Kitses' *Horizons West*):

Even if we see a particular work in terms of a larger archetype, does this explain anything? . . . The archetypes stand just as much in need of explanation as the particular works. And we understand the archetypes in so far as we see them constituted of particular works. The significance of an archetype is constituted of the significance of the particular works which make it up

to understand whether the bat and cave archetypes are present in *Tom Sawyer*, in what way they are present, and what it is for them to be present, we must already understand *Tom Sawyer*. Hence the archetypes cannot enable us to understand the novel, and archetypes cannot be the constitutive, explanatory principles of literature.¹¹

Casey's argument applies very aptly to an observation made by Jim Kitses:

To see a church in a movie – any film but a western – is to see a church: the camera records. By working carefully for it a film-maker can give the church meaning, through visual emphasis, context, repetitions, dialogue. But a church in a western has *a priori* a potential expressiveness rooted in the accretions of the past. In Ford's *My Darling Clementine* a half-built church appears in one brief scene: yet it embodies the spirit of pioneer America.¹²

The rebuttal can be offered that the meaning of the half-built church in Ford's film could only have arisen from the same areas as in non-Western films – visual emphasis, context, repetitions, dialogue. If the meaning of Ford's church is that it embodies the spirit of pioneer America, then the attaching of significance to that concept must have come from a full understanding of this and previous Ford films in their minute particularities.

The structural critic wanting to bring someone to see the meaning of a Hawks or Ford film would achieve little by arguing that the films are instances of significant patterns. The answer 'So what?' would not be inappropriate. For the doubter to come to see and value the pattern, he would have to see and value *the films* in a new way. In Casey's words, 'All this means that the resort to archetypes cannot replace the insights of criticism.'¹³

Robin Wood's Reply

Wood's 'An Answer to Alan Lovell' makes interesting and useful reading in that it pinpoints the uncertainties of the structuralist position and demonstrates the relative strength of his own. Consider his challenge to Lovell's view of structural criticism as being 'purely descriptive':

A sense of value is inherent in the critic's response from the outset. Without it how could he possibly decide which directors to apply structural analysis to? Mr Lovell can't convince me that he decided to explore Siegel by sticking a pin in a directory of directors.¹⁴

Wood is here denying that Lovell is undertaking a different form of discourse from that in which he as an 'evaluating' critic is engaged. That being so, then the discourse can proceed, the issue being whether Lovell and the other structuralists can offer more appropriate justifications for the critical judgments they are making than he, Wood, was offering.

It [Lovell's book on Don Siegel] is an admirable introduction, providing a useful map or blueprint from which one could explore Siegel's work. Yet it stops short where criticism begins. It will explain to anyone the thematic structure of Siegel's work; it will not, I think, convince anyone of the work's value, or even supply the kind of basis on which its value could be discussed.¹⁵

Wood then turns his attention away from Lovell to Peter Wollen's evaluations of Howard Hawks and John Ford, claiming that Wollen erects 'a ghostly paradigm' of the directors' films . . .

. . . a kind of Ideal Film existing in some Platonic never-never land, and judges from it the director's significance. It also enables him to evaluate individual films according to how far they contribute to it and approximate to it.¹⁶

Wollen's descriptions, given in terms of paired opposites ('alongside every dramatic hero we are aware of a phantom, stripped of mastery, humiliated, inverted'¹⁶) cannot count as criteria of value, Wood claims, arguing that the structuralists are attempting to turn criticism into a science. He notes that the importance of particular films is not increased in any way by the discovery of their contributions to a paradigm, or their instantiating an archetype or antinomy.

The artist's achievements are there in fully realised works. . . . If Mr Wollen wants to convince us of its [*Wings of Eagles*] value, I can see no way in which he can do this without offering a detailed analysis of how the film works as a self-sufficient entity.¹⁷

The justice of Wood's point is better seen by comparing Wood's and Wollen's handling of a parallel concern – the relative importance of the ideas extractable from the films of valued directors.

WOLLEN: It could well be argued that Hawks's outlook . . . the Hawkseian heterocosm . . . is not one imbued with particular intellectual subtlety or sophistication. This does not detract from its force.¹⁸

But it is not part of Wollen's critical procedure to show what it is for a film to have force. There is no way open to him, apart from asserting that it is the case, to justify the judgment that this Ford film is more forceful than that Hawks film, or that this Ford film is more forceful than that Ford film. He gives an evaluative weight to the complexity of the shifting relationships between antinomies, but this really replaces one undemonstrated assertion (the film has force) with another undemonstrated assertion (a complexity of shifting relationships counts as a criterion of value). Nothing in Wollen's account *argues* these matters.

Moreover, it seems appropriate to ask what films would be excluded from the ranks of 'forceful' films, if the presence of

paired opposites is to function as evidence of value. Do we include the *Tom and Jerry* cartoons of the 'forties and 'fifties? Do we count Tex Avery and Chuck Jones as auteurs? The films could be described as possessing antinomic characteristics – small versus big, powerful versus powerless, intelligence versus unintelligence. And to so describe them might be enlightening as a sociological or psychological study; but would the description count as a criterion of value?

The question is not a rhetorical one, for it is conceivable that fitting answers could be given (a detailed examination of the cartoons and a process of comparing and contrasting them with other films might *show* their good-making features). But the point is that Wollen sees no necessity to take his case any further. The presence of antinomies is both a necessary and a sufficient condition for positive valuing.

WOOD: Structural analysis . . . can tell us little of the intrinsic value of these directors. What will be revealed will be of its nature very basic and probably very banal. The kind of underlying structure Mr Wollen discovers in Ford, for example, has no particular value . . . in itself. In proffering it . . . Mr Wollen takes Ford's intrinsic value for granted. The emerging paradigm could as well be used to argue a case *against* Ford, laying bare the crude and platitudinous nature of his 'thought'. My point is that Ford would be unscathed by such hypothetical attack: the artist is never to be equated with the ideas that can be abstracted from his work. The value of Ford's art lies in the way his emotional commitments are realised in the movement of sounds and images on the screen.¹⁹

Wood, unlike Wollen, is not taking anything external to the work – a principle, an idea, a motif or antinomy – as giving it significance, but rather the surface features of the work and their relationships with each other.

Within the context of Wood's disagreement with Alan Lovell over the value of *High Noon*, both of these forms of reasoning (the intensive and the extensive) are demonstrated. The former is at the heart of these words:

One cannot talk about a film meaningfully without finding some way of discussing the actual life of the film, which is the movement of images and sounds. . . . Is it not possible (in theory at least, for I think in practice the sequences in question will be found indefensible) that our hypothetical defender of *High Noon* could offer an analysis of those scenes that could demonstrate their creative vitality?²⁰

The questioning nature of the quotation makes Wood's position more tentative than it should be (and, in the light of his article as a whole, than it is). The answer to his question is that the hypothetical defender *could* offer such an analysis, but only if he had

an eccentric understanding of what 'creative vitality' and 'cliché' meant. You may see *High Noon* as enacting creative vitality, but then how would you describe *Rio Bravo*? If *High Noon* isn't a cliché, then what films can be so described? Wood's procedures involve a description of the individual work's features, and the description entails a valuation. If the description is denied, then further details are brought into the discourse (dialogue, acting, editing, camera position). If the description is still denied, then the work has to be compared and contrasted with other works so that the aspect of *High Noon* under debate dawns on the doubter. He *comes to see* the work as a cliché. He discovers no new facts in the work, nor has he had anything proved to him. Rather does he perceive the work from a new perspective, its elements rearranged to form a new pattern.

While it is the case, as John Casey notes,²¹ that there might be little we can do 'if a man insists on describing something as being like *this*, despite all the evidence we can bring that it is like *that*', this would be the position in science as well. It is always logically possible for a person to claim 'I don't call *that* testing; I don't call *that* proof; I don't call *that* evidence', for all rational demonstration depends on common understandings. The clear line of demarcation that Alan Lovell saw between the 'dogmatic interpretations' of aesthetics, and the logic of scientific explanations, is far less apparent than he thinks. In a sense, Lovell's pejorative comment that Wood's criticism (like F. R. Leavis's) rests on a 'shared, stable system of beliefs and values' is true, if not quite in the way he seemed to mean it. Just as we would find it difficult to hold as a human ideal one who was lame, blind, deaf, dumb and mentally retarded *because* he had those characteristics without changing our concept of what a man is, so too (Wood appears to be saying) we could not admire cliché features as being creative and vital, without changing our concept of what 'cliché' is, or what it means to be creative and vital. We could not achieve such a change without constructing a new context of meaning and value in which all the works previously seen as being cliché-ridden were now to be seen as creatively vital.

Wood touches on this point when he defends his account of Roger Thornhill's immaturity in *North by Northwest*:

Hitchcock presents a man who has gone through two marriages, his attitude to which is extremely casual; who, in middle age, is still dominated by his mother; who drinks heavily; who shows no attachment to other people . . . and *uses* them very irresponsibly. This, I think, establishes him as immature. Are 'beliefs and values' so uncertain that there is really no agreement as to what constitutes immaturity?²²

That is, Thornhill's behaviour stands as a criterion of immaturity;

it demonstrates what we *mean* by 'immaturity', and to see it as something else would require either an eccentric understanding of the word, or an eccentric understanding of the way we 'place' human behaviour. In like manner, Robin Wood's critical account of sequences in *High Noon* argues that the public features of those sequences stand as criteria of cliché, as the word is understood with reference to films. If Alan Lovell disagrees with the description, he can only proceed by *showing* its inappropriateness – by bringing Wood to 'see' the features in a different way. Nothing I have read in his articles to date suggests that he understands this to be the characteristic form of the critical discourse in which he is engaged.

It can be said by way of summary that the structural critics, while offering useful contributions to the understanding of how genre films may be linked, have little to give to the processes of criticism. It is their position that the films of particular directors gain force by virtue of their embodying certain structures and motifs. Against this, Robin Wood correctly argues that if such structures and motifs have force, it is based in the intelligence, vitality and complexity of the works themselves. The judgment that they *are* so characterised is a critical matter, available for demonstration and justification only with reference to the surface features of the works, and those works seen and 'placed' in the context of other works.

References

1. See *Screen*, Vol 10, No 2 (pp 42–55), No 3 (pp 35–48), and Vol 11, No 4/5 (pp 76–88).
2. *The Language of Criticism*, John Casey, Methuen (London), 1966.
3. 'Robin Wood – A Dissenting View', Alan Lovell, in *Screen*, Vol 10, No 2, 1969.
4. *ibid*, p 46.
5. *ibid*, p 47.
6. *ibid*, p 48.
7. *ibid*, p 54.
8. *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*, Peter Wollen. Secker & Warbure (London), 1969, p 94.
9. *ibid*, p 102.
10. *ibid*, p 102.
11. John Casey, *op cit*, p 145.
12. *Horizons West*, Jim Kitses, Thames & Hudson (London), 1969, p 21.
13. John Casey, *op cit*, p 151.
14. 'Ghostly Paradigm and H.C.F. An Answer to Alan Lovell', Robin Wood, in *Screen*, Vol 10, No 3, 1969, p 47.
15. *ibid*, p 43.
16. *ibid*, p 40.
17. *ibid*, p 41.
18. Peter Wollen, *op cit*, p 94.
19. Robin Wood, *op cit*, p 47.
20. *ibid*, p 45.
21. John Casey, *op cit*, p 174.
22. Robin Wood, *op cit*, p 39.

Alan Lovell's suggestion¹ that we wait until we 'understand the nature of the cinema (all cinema) and its ways of operating' before we make value judgments is absurd. Clearly such a time will never come. Even if the cinema were complete, like the works of Shakespeare, new approaches which might lead to new understanding of its 'nature' would always be possible. With cinema we also have to keep open the possibility that a new film, as well as a new work of criticism, may reveal an aspect of cinema which we had not considered. Thus, if we accepted Lovell's suggestion, we'd *never* be entitled to begin making value judgments.

Wittgenstein² exorcised from philosophy the idea that there is some 'nature' or essence of things like cinema, which, if discovered, would illuminate the study of particular films. As with games (Wittgenstein's example), there is merely a number of overlapping similarities like fibres in a thread, no one of which runs through the whole thread, and the thread, like the cinema, may be extended.

We can talk about the nature of celluloid, ie in terms of the causal laws to which *any* piece of it is subject. But, as R. Wellek says: 'All determination, all causal explanation must fail in the study of literature. It is never successful in establishing the first requirement of any causal relationship: "When x occurs, y must occur".'³ This applies equally to the other arts and this is why Lovell's analogy⁴ between the body as an object of scientific study and a work of art as such is inappropriate.

Lovell's claim⁵ that 'a few directors have arbitrarily been pronounced great' involves a misuse of the term 'arbitrarily'. To the extent that reasons justifying a choice are offered the choice is not an arbitrary one. If the reasons are capable of being checked against intersubjectively agreed criteria (which vary from field to field, and are not restricted to science) then they are objective, and, to the extent that agreement is reached, established with varying degrees of certainty. Therefore the uncertainty of evaluative judgments which worries Lovell⁶ can only be overcome by making such judgments, not by misguidedly waiting until we understand the supposed 'nature' of all cinema.

References

1. *Screen*, Vol 11, No 4/5, p 81.
2. *Philosophical Investigations*, L. Wittgenstein, B. Blackwell, 1967, pp 31-34.
3. *The Critical Moment*, R. Wellek, Faber & Faber, 1964, p 44.
4. *Op cit*, p 78.
5. *Op cit*, p 82.
6. *Op cit*, p 81.

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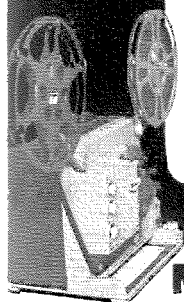
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Art History and Film Studies in Art Colleges

Gerry Coubro

For almost ten years now art colleges and art education have been in a state of confusion, even contradiction, which the affairs of Hornsey and Guildford have done nothing to resolve. Indeed, they have virtually been forgotten about. Their ineffectual contribution to any kind of rethinking in art education, as well as the present state of art colleges, concerns among other things a failure to confront the division between theory and practice and to formulate a critical, conceptual methodology by which the two, theoretical studies and practical ones, can usefully coexist. Administrative modifications to a system whereby the two are, in the last analysis, simply juxtaposed are predictably unsatisfactory. Until there is an ideological change on the part of the art colleges themselves and the Department of Education and Science, subject areas like Art History and Film Studies will continue to occupy a position uncomfortable to the teachers, the student body and members of staff of other departments.

The general lack of interest of students in non-studio activities, which fall into the category of Complementary Studies, can be interpreted both as a result and a reflection of the nebulous and diffident thinking on the part of the Coldstream Committee which first introduced them into the curriculum in 1960. The idea that they should both complement and service the chief study areas, like Painting, Sculpture, Design, etc, is emphasised as much by their use of the term as by the allocation of only 15 per cent of a student's time to them. As such the notion of Complementary Studies stands more as a wish fulfilment than as a reality because it both ignores the fact that there are problems and methods peculiar to them as disciplines in their own right, and also reduces the issue of critical methodology and the essential difference between the criticism of products, whether a film or painting, and the making of them to the practical issue of teaching and teachers.

Students (as much as staff) are aware of the dichotomies that exist not only between these two kinds of discipline, but between the chief study areas themselves. Nevertheless, however unsympathetic they may be, as the Hornsey students were, to the consequent separation of disciplines, few have the means to overcome it. First, for the majority of their time they are subject to an

ideology that is the prime cause of the separation (one which is based on practice, vocationalism, and the acquisition and development of technical skills), and second, their ability to handle words and language is poor. This is a consequence of operational modes which confine the activities of departments in art colleges that can best remedy this lack – Complementary Studies.

As a result of linguistic deficiencies, characterised by difficulty in oral and written articulation and a lack of interest in reading, the majority of students lose out on their chief means for formulating relationships and accept the notion that 'feeling' can act as an adequate critical response to phenomena. The combined effect of these leads to a situation where thought, theory and speculation become problematic and unpalatable. The notions of 'self-expression' and 'creativity' in this context contribute then not to a breaking down of disciplinary barriers, but instead to a maintenance of them and a study situation which is isolationist, personally centred and closed to criticism. The exploration by means of the senses alone rather than in conjunction with the intellect is, maybe, encouraged by the increasingly widespread use of visual aids in education. Their attempt to stimulate student interest may be in fact instrumental in strengthening on the part of the student what ultimately is an emotive response to the forms as well as the tools that are used in Film Studies and Art History for critical attention, debate and analysis, ie films, film extracts and slides.

The conflict of interest, arising out of the anti-intellectualism of art students and art school ideology, affects Art History and Film Studies more fundamentally perhaps than other areas in Complementary Studies. The students, all being practitioners in either film, design or fine art, look at the objects used in these studies for different things (frequently technical factors and information), different reasons and in a different way from the art historian and film critic. They are at odds in their selection of different elements, as well as different sets of relationships, and in their possible conceptualisation of the studies and its objects, with a critical approach that is concerned with a different relational orientation of aesthetics, history and production modes and a conceptualisation of finished art objects as a part of wider systems defined by notions of style, genre, chronology, form, etc.

In addition, because of such factors as stimulus demands and studio relations, preferential areas are set up in art and film alike which may not just conflict with the kind of relationships pertinent to historical and aesthetic criticism, but ultimately undermine the disciplines themselves. It may be significant, for example, that the emphasis in most college Art History departments is on Nineteenth and Twentieth Century studies, and that in Film Studies the preference on the large part of the students is for the European, the Soviet and the Underground cinemas. Their indifference to, or critical dismissal of, the major areas of cinema, namely American

films, is indicative of the strength of their practical/studio orientation, their wish for a certain kind of stimulus which is not afforded by popular, commercial movies or is dulled by, among other things, their familiarity with them through television, and their incapacity for the kind of critical activity that informs Complementary Studies departments. It is not a question of whether or not American movies are enjoyed, but rather that the kind of experience they afford makes critical analysis not only difficult, but more difficult when experience alone is considered a sufficient critical activity in itself.

From this point of view, the conventional methods that have informed both Art History and Film Criticism might be considered inadequate in so far as they evade the issue of experience (inescapable when directly confronted with the objects) in their attempt to establish objective critical criteria. This failure can be related to the fact that both studies have had to derive their methodologies from disciplines outside of themselves, like philosophy, science, psychology, literature, linguistics, social anthropology, etc. This may have contributed to the effect that the kinds of information they afford about the objects are not only secondary to a visual, physical experience of them, but make of the objects a source of reference for facts, ideas and issues that concern them only partially. This might apply as much to the use of literary, critical methods in films, as to the use of chronology or iconology, for example, in Art History. Further, the notion that such objects can be seen as aspects of history itself not only conflicts with our own inevitably different experience of them, but also, as far as Art History is concerned, with the methods it depends upon in its study. The formal distortion and historical dislocation brought about by reproduction processes and museum collections begs the question as to whether or not the study of art as part of history should not be replaced by the notion that art historical studies, as conducted inside of art colleges, be conceived instead as the study of the history of the photography of art history.

For Film Studies, however, the question of the usefulness of an historical approach is both different and less relevant because of the nature of film and the cinema itself. The problem, in fact, in teaching Film Studies is that although aesthetic criticism and structuralist analysis draw attention to the film itself as the object, they cannot answer the questions they ultimately raise, for example about the quality of the film, nor take sufficient account of the disparities between the experience of the film and its structure. The area where this is made most critically apparent is the American cinema, where not only are the aesthetic and constructive elements often passed unnoticed by the audience, but where the separation of roles between director, scenarist, production and technical crews – analogous, maybe, to those inside of art colleges – is possibly at its greatest. The fact that André Bazin chose this area as a platform for the re-direction of film criticism might indicate that film

aesthetics alone is insufficient as a critical method.

There is a need to develop a critical theory of perceptual methodology which takes account of the nature of film as well as the experience and involvements of the spectator and critic. In this way emotional response itself, which is after all one of the cinema's most powerful attributes, may be placed inside a critical framework. The importance, in fact, that art students attach to experience is perhaps paradoxically the most useful contribution that can be made to the development of critical methods used in Art History and Film Studies.

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The decision to devote this year's SEFT Summer School to the subject of television came about partly by force of circumstance. When we found that we could only manage a week, we realised that any film-making exercises were out of the question in such a short time. Fortunately, some closed-circuit television equipment was made available to us, and that seemed a good reason for spending the whole week on television. Although the Society's name indicates an interest in television, this has not always been very evident in the past, and some activity in that direction seemed long overdue.

Enrolments were disappointing, though this was almost certainly due to the high cost. But a small group turned out to be an advantage in the CCTV work, since everyone had ample opportunity to get really familiar with the equipment. This turned out to be very basic (two cameras, an effects generator and ½ in VTR with monitor), but few schools or even colleges are likely to have more.

The object of the course was both to give rudimentary instruction in the possibilities of CCTV and also to study British television through lectures and discussions. We were not interested in educational television as such, but we were interested in encouraging teachers in schools and colleges to take the medium seriously, to teach it in the way film is already being taught.

A week turned out to be barely five days, and in this time we could do no more than introduce a number of topics. Phillip Whitehead MP and Stuart Hood came up to speak on the structure of broadcasting in this country, Peter Golding described the work of the Centre for Mass Communication Research at Leicester University, and Philip Donnellan talked about a series of documentaries he has recently had shown on BBC-TV. Resident on the course, besides myself, were Charles Barr of St John's College, York, who ran the CCTV work as well as lecturing on television drama, and Richard Dyer, from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham. He is working on the subject of light entertainment on television.

Everyone agreed, I think, that it was high time television studies were developed, and that next year's Summer School should be a much more ambitious programme on the same subject.

Edward Buscombe

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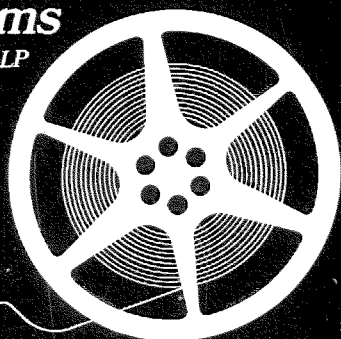
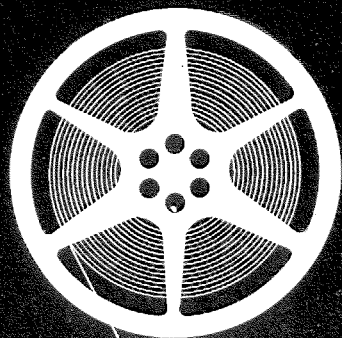
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Nicholas Beattie

I Background

Modern foreign languages claim their place in the curriculum at least partly on 'cultural' grounds: learning a foreign language is supposed to extend the perspective and experience of the learner beyond his own immediate cultural environment. It is then surprising that until recently¹ the examination framework which governs almost all language learning in this country made no explicit recognition of the foreign culture until the Sixth Form level. At this point, those marks allotted to 'culture' (about a quarter of the A-level total in a subject) are almost invariably allocated solely to the study of a small number (four to six) of set books of recognised literary merit, so that in effect foreign culture has always been equated with foreign literature.

This narrow and traditional but pedagogically manageable version of culture has in recent years come under fire, and at all levels of foreign language teaching² there has been a considerable shift of opinion towards what is usually known as *civilisation* or 'background studies' – ie the study of aspects of foreign civilisation other than, or additional to, the purely literary. This study is usually weighted towards the contemporary. These developments are now at last beginning to be reflected in the 'Alternative' A-level syllabuses of one or two Boards, though the large majority of candidates still study for the traditional 'set books' paper.

This move towards more broadly-based cultural studies has been very generally welcomed, both as a way of making modern languages more relevant to the present interests and future needs of students, and as an attempt to cater more adequately for the increasing number of Sixth-formers for whom an A-level is a terminal qualification rather than a mere passport to a university degree in literature. But doubts persist: *civilisation* as it is currently preached and to some extent practised is not without its problems. James (in Russell, 1970, 173) comments: 'A legitimate desire to escape the domination of literary set-books is in danger of leading to the evolution of ramshackle alliances of bits and pieces of history, geography and other traditional subjects which might, in practice, amount to little more than a sort of "general knowledge" or "current events" course, insufficient in academic depth and intellectual demand.' One might add that this kind of rag-bag course,

as well as calling for a wide range of books and other resources which most schools still lack, makes great demands on the teacher: much of the opposition to background studies has come not from reactionary diehards (though they exist), but from teachers who genuinely distrust their own competence to achieve the aims with which in theory they sympathise.

II Neglect of Film

Admirers of Sherlock Holmes will recall that the really significant thing was the dog which did *not* bark in the night. Within this area of more or less noisy curriculum controversy – what ought we to teach about foreign cultures? – there is at least one zone of deafening silence: cinema. When (rarely) films are mentioned, it is in an entirely subordinate ‘visual aid’ capacity – travel films, newsreels of the October Revolution, filmed *Comédie Française* productions. A very wide range of areas of national endeavour is urged as being appropriate for Sixth Form study: for example, the York Feasibility Study produced plans for units (based on the region of Nürnberg) dealing with opera (Wagner), language (folk-tale), cookery, history (Nürnberg Laws and Nazi Party rallies), geography and art (Dürer) (Schools Council, 1970, Appendix G). So far, however, no writer³ seems prepared to propose the direct study by Sixth-formers of ‘the seventh art’ as practised in the country whose language he or she is studying. Admittedly, the experts would certainly accept that if films are available and financially accessible they ought to be shown as *adjuncts* of background studies. For example, Leni Riefenstahl’s films or Beyer’s *Naked Among Wolves* might well be commended as illustrating aspects of the Nazi period, or Renoir’s *La Marseillaise* as illustrating the French Revolution and/or the 1936 *Front Populaire* which was the inspiration behind that film. But what nobody in this field seems to acknowledge is that it is as naïve to consider only the content of a major film as to study a Balzac novel only as reportage on nineteenth-century capitalism. Film is allowed into school as an incidental: but to consider form and content *together* seems so far to have occurred to no one in the modern language world.

Is this omission purely fortuitous? It certainly seems rather strange. After all, the general controversy about background studies centres round two basic questions: (1) What is culture? (2) Which bits of culture does one choose to teach? – and whether one interprets ‘culture’ in the broad anthropological sense or the narrow artistic sense, it would seem to include the cinema. As for the second question, all writers seem at least to agree that Sixth Form studies should be weighted in some degree towards the twentieth century, as being more linguistically and culturally accessible to our pupils than earlier periods: so there would seem to be at least a case for the inclusion in an advanced modern language course of what is perhaps the most characteristic twentieth-century art form.

There may of course be practical reasons which make it impossible to include feature films within the Sixth Form course – but the point here is that modern linguists have not even advanced the suggestion in order to refute it. Perhaps it is not altogether irrelevant to ask: ‘Why this blind spot?’

Briefly, I would suggest three possible reasons:

(1) Modern linguists are *language-oriented*: they see their primary function as linguistic, if only in the sense that a certain mastery of a foreign language is a precondition of an imaginative and sympathetic approach to the corresponding foreign culture.

(2) Modern linguists are *book-oriented*. Until very recently their whole professional training and experience has been literary. Even the moves away from literature towards background studies described in the first part of this article are really moves towards studying contemporary France or Germany through books. (There are of course strong practical reasons why the book should long continue to be the *predominant* medium for advanced study, but need it be the *sole* medium?)

(3) (More controversially) modern linguists are *used to being at the centre of all classroom activity*. In the early stages of the language course the learner is necessarily dependent on the teacher, and this relationship tends to carry over into situations where dependence is less appropriate. The introduction of film puts teacher and taught on an equal footing in the face of a common experience, and it may be that modern language teachers, used above all to the authoritative exposition of texts, are more reluctant than teachers of other subjects to put themselves in that situation.

III Reasons for Introducing Film

So much for preliminaries. Let us now turn our attention more directly towards film and its potential within the Sixth Form modern language course as an art form in its own right. To facilitate discussion, I will present the basic case in a series of numbered propositions.

1. It would be unfortunate if the current move away from literary studies were to eliminate ‘the arts’ from Sixth Form modern language study. Surely one of the points the teacher of any culture, foreign or otherwise, should try to put over is that the arts cover a multiplicity of media. On the other hand, quite clearly the teacher cannot cover every medium. If therefore we wish to advance the claims of film as a teachable art-form, we must show good reason for including film *rather than* painting, architecture, music, etc. I suggest that our central argument for preferring film to any art form other than literature designed for reading is a pedagogical one. Film does not have to be presented to students at second hand, through photographs, texts, etc. *Film is capable of direct presentation in the form that the film-maker intended*. Film is experience rather than verbalisation about second-

hand experience.

2. *Film is capable of high artistic quality.* It is arguable for example that over the past fifty years French cinema has been markedly more original and inventive than the conventional theatre, and that by concentrating exclusively on the latter, teachers of French are steering their students into a cultural backwater.

3. *Film by-passes the language barrier.* To get to grips with for example French classical drama, students must grapple with a complex and sophisticated use of a foreign language: the language in a film is essentially subordinate to the visual element.

4. *Film can help to restore the balance in favour of 'visual literacy'.* It is a truism to state the increasingly visual nature of twentieth-century culture, and the receptivity of children to visual impressions; yet Sixth Forms certainly, and perhaps schools generally, seem to do their best to stifle this faculty. How many Sixth-formers who can analyse a sonnet in detail can discuss the visual techniques of a TV programme or an advertisement at all intelligently?

5. *Film is 'pedagogically manageable' in a way that background studies are not.* A set film, like a set book, gives the teacher and the student a clearly definable base. Discussion may be very wide-ranging, but it can be firmly anchored in a common experience. This also assists rational assessment procedures. As a teaching procedure, the project style of inquiry can be admirable: as an assessment procedure, it has grave weaknesses.

IV Effect of Film on Curriculum

Let us now suppose that the study of feature films is introduced into the Sixth Form modern language syllabus. What effect is this innovation likely to have on the existing framework as sketched in in Section I of this article? We have to consider four main areas of impact.

(i) *Language.* Proposition 3 (Section III) probably raises dark suspicions in many language teachers that film is an easy option, a non-linguistic sop to the illiterate. Certainly a student reading a traditional set-book has to work hard *linguistically* if he is to get at the *artistic* meat of the text. Because of language difficulties, the appreciation of the text as a work of art normally comes for the Sixth-former *after* the linguistic grind (and of course for many the stage of appreciation is never reached – they merely parrot the sentiments of their teacher or their text's preface). I suggest that film would operate in the reverse sequence: the initial showing would make a considerable *artistic* impact, and would be followed by *linguistic* work of two kinds – first, work on the actual *script* of the film; secondly, work on factual *monographs* in the foreign language on the particular film or film-maker. This latter suggestion would incidentally go some way towards meeting the shrewd criticism of Holland (Russell, 1970, chapter 8) that linguistically our

Sixth-formers are starved of the register of rational intellectual discourse in the foreign language. Note also that the sequence proposed (artistic experience followed by close study) is much more normal and motivating than the reverse sequence.

(ii) *Literature*. I have carefully refrained from saying that 'film is superior to literature'. What I am saying is that, in the modern language field at least, and at a level of linguistic competence and general cultural experience where inevitably the learner's approach to the foreign culture must be somewhat faltering, there are pedagogical reasons for preferring film to certain forms of literature, including drama, which impose second-hand experience. Novels and poetry on the other hand are meant to be read, and, provided they are not too linguistically complex or culturally remote, will give the Sixth-former valuable first-hand contact with a foreign culture. I see no reason why the study of literature should not proceed side by side with the study of film: in fact a valid syllabus should surely make provision for *both* verbal (oral and textual) *and* visual experience.

(iii) '*Civilisation*'. A third area in such a syllabus might be set aside for 'free choice': an unregulated area of this kind seems more meaningful within a regulated pattern than standing on its own, as the more enthusiastic supporters of background studies advocate. What one is anxious to avoid is film becoming just one more trendy item to be included in the general rag-bag. If propositions 2 and 4 (Section III) are valid, then film must be in the syllabus in its own right, not as a mere extra or illustration of something else.

(iv) *Position of the teacher*. Within this area of the curriculum, this would change somewhat along the lines suggested under head (3) (Section II). As teacher and students discuss the film after the initial showing, they are obliged by the nature of their common experience to supplement each other's impressions: students may well recall details which the teacher has forgotten or overlooked, and vice versa. The teacher will have to treat the script rather differently from the traditional set book: he must be aware that the script is an *aide-mémoire* or secondary representation of certain aspects of the film only.

(v) *Relations with other subjects*. The visual arts generally cut across national boundaries more easily than literature. Students specialising in other subjects, or working in the language at a lower linguistic level than A-level (eg Sixth-formers 'keeping their French going'), are very likely to find topics of interest in foreign films, and interdisciplinary discussions of this kind, if properly organised, could be fruitful to all concerned. One must also consider the wide variety of topics which the intelligent discussion of film calls forth – including such matters as the technology and economics of film production which cut right across traditional arts/science demarcation lines. These are important considerations,

especially in view of the likely recasting of the entire A-level framework over the next few years.

V Conclusion

My general approach in this article has been deliberately theoretical. The next move must be towards something more practical: an attempt to realise and exemplify the advantages described in proposition 5 (Section III). Clearly, if anything is to get off the ground (ie into the schools), every support for the enterprising teacher must be marshalled, or 'teaching film' will seem even more daunting than 'teaching background studies'.

The first need is to work out a list of criteria governing the choice of films: among those criteria would be aesthetic excellence, appropriateness of content and comprehensibility of language (it would be quixotic at this stage to press for the inclusion of silent film in a language course); availability of script and of other published material on the film or its director; length; ease and cheapness of hiring. With the aid of such criteria it should not be difficult to establish a brief list of films for the most important language areas and to move on from there to the important question of how best to teach in this area¹ – always bearing in mind that Sixth Form teachers are not generally experts on film, and lack both the time and the resources for major private research, so that some kind of 'resource package' might be the most practical answer. Prolonged discussion would also be necessary on the practical problems of integrating film into the existing syllabus and testing it meaningfully.

These important questions are reserved for future discussion. I do not underestimate their difficulty, but it seems important to me that a debate of this kind should *begin* on a relatively theoretical level. We cannot afford at this stage to be either dogmatic or merely pragmatic. For example, while I feel that the concept of 'visual literacy' is an important one which will obviously determine our objectives, I have very little idea of how this might be translated into 'desired pupil behaviour', and this kind of ignorance must not be glossed over in our innovatory enthusiasm. Film in schools has rarely been more than a gimmick or an aid: if it is to be anything more, the ground needs careful preparation.

Footnotes

1. In the mid-sixties, CSE Boards began to introduce projects, testing of extensive reading, etc.
2. That is, both before and after Sixth Form level. If in this paper I concentrate on the Sixth Form, this is certainly not because I wish to exclude the benefits of the study of film from other areas of the educational system, but because the Sixth Form seems to me (a) strategically the most important point in the system for this kind of innovation, and (b) tactically manageable with a minimum of practical difficulties.
3. An exception, from the other side of the Atlantic, and therefore working within a rather different framework, is Jean Decock, who com-

bines enthusiasm with some useful practical suggestions. But his approach remains essentially literary. '*S'il fallait choisir entre le film et son texte, je choisirais sans ambages le scénario publié et je me consolerais de l'impossibilité de voir le film.*' (Decock, 1970, 470)

4. The growing availability in schools of videotape facilities has great potential in this context: but for some time to come these will be the exception rather than the rule, and discussion at this stage should proceed on the assumption that only 16mm projection facilities are available.

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Dominique Noguez

Anyone who tries, today, to formulate a comprehensive view of the cinema is bound to gain much the same initial impression of it as Ferdinand de Saussure did of language at the beginning of the century, namely: that it is 'a confused mass of heteroclyte elements, without any link between them'.¹ And it is certainly true that just as language can appear, according to the point of view adopted, to be most closely related to anthropology, or philology, or normative grammar or phonology, etc, so the cinema can be the object of aesthetic, historical, sociological, psychoanalytic, thematic and now semiological study, or of a technical apprenticeship, or even – since the cinema has long been, and for the time being remains, 'also an industry' (to use Malraux's words), ie an object of commerce – of a specialised commercial training.²

However, it is possible to make more sense of the phenomenon cinema, if one envisages it as a continuous process which can be decomposed into stages. Logically and chronologically, the cinema is *first of all a work of artistic creation*, bringing into play diverse technical procedures demanding practical knowledge and experience and resulting in the production of a certain object (the film). *Next* comes the problem of conveying the film to those for whom it is intended: this is the *distribution* stage. Once distribution has been secured, the film reaches its audience: this we might call the *reception* stage. This stage has its own problems, such as how the film is perceived, and what is its social impact. Then follows the stage of the *seeing* or '*reading*' of the film by the audience, the critic, or the historian. *Finally* the cinema can be the object of *theoretical reflection* which can be directed upon any of the stages, and of the component parts of the cinematic 'process'.

It will be seen that film teaching means something different according to which stage one is talking about. The first, creative, stage, as we have pointed out, requires technical knowledge (camerawork, sound recording, editing, etc) or at the very least a certain know-how (scriptwriting, direction, production, etc). The second stage, if it exists at all (it is more or less absent in the case

* These short introductory remarks on cinema teaching are based in part on certain elements of a report carried out for the Laval University of Quebec in 1970.

of those types of films variously called 'personal', 'experimental' and 'underground'), requires commercial rather than artistic experience (publicity, distribution, exhibition). The exception to this rule are non-commercial organisations (notably film institutes) where extensive knowledge of the history of the cinema is indispensable. No particular knowledge is required for the third stage (if not everybody can really *see* a film, everybody can *receive* it, with or without training, with or without 'culture'. The fourth stage, on the other hand, calls into play a very large number of disciplines: in order to be able to see, decode and interpret a film we need (ideally) to be able not only to situate it in the history of the cinema, in the author's work, and in a precise cultural and artistic context, but also to be able to apply to it all the existing critical grids (structural, thematic, philosophical, political, psycho-analytic, etc), and be capable of weighing up its ideological status and role. The last stage, that of theory, cannot be reached without a very advanced conceptual apparatus and a rigorous methodology: this is the stage of abstract or experimental research.

The type of film teaching which it is important to develop at the university is, of course, that corresponding to the last two stages, for the simple reason that, in France at any rate, practically no teaching of this type is available at all, in or out of the university,³ whereas instruction corresponding to the first three stages either is available at certain universities,⁴ or else can be obtained elsewhere, even if only, because of the highly specialised character of the skills involved, in the existing professional organisations. However, in the cinema, more than anywhere else, theoretical teaching cannot be really fruitful unless it goes hand in hand with practice. So the universities ought also to give instruction corresponding to the first stage of the filmic process – at the very least an introduction to the handling of equipment (cameras, editing tables, sound equipment, etc) and to filmic creation. So, in the ideal cinema department there ought to be equipment for the student to learn to handle, films for him to learn to 'see', and a theoretical course that will enable him to think out his practice and his vision. The necessity for such a combination of *doing*, *seeing* and *thinking* is so evident that it is generally recognised by all those people who – pending the setting up of an ideal cinema department – manage here and there to practise the fragmented form of film teaching which is at present the only one possible.

It would not be the purpose of such a department to prepare its students for all cinematic trades, or even to train future directors: that is the business of the few existing cinema schools (IDHEC . . . but for how much longer?, INSAS in Brussels, the *Centro Sperimentale* in Rome, the London Film School, the school of cinema at Lodz, etc) or those which could come into being tomorrow – possibly as a result of certain university cinema departments growing larger and more independent and splitting off from the

parent body. For the present, universities ought rather to aim to produce film historians, teachers, archivists, film society organisers, critics, theoreticians or quite simply cinéphiles – and, better still, they ought to aim, through exercising their critical function to the full, to delimit, analyse, and defuse the ideological elements at work in the cinematic process.

However, the development of this kind of teaching runs contrary to various other approaches to the cinema, whose claim to theoretical seriousness – in so far as their proponents ever feel called upon to justify them at that level – rests upon a certain number of received ideas which we should now like to reveal and explode.

(I) The first of these approaches, which might be called the 'iconomaniac', consists in the first instance of announcing loudly and persistently that 'our civilisation' is a 'civilisation of images' and that the era of writing and books is at an end.⁶ But would we have given this 'theory' a moment's credence without all the writing and all the books that have been devoted to it?⁷ And no doubt it would need many more words still to persuade historians that the people of the Middle Ages, for example – three-quarters of whom were illiterate, but whose cathedrals were swarming with statues of saints and gargoyles and whose great pleasure lay in the art of the spectacle, sacred or profane – were men of the written word; and that we, with our mass-circulation papers, our paperbacks and our best-sellers, are the inventors of the image. 'The day of the image is here!' is the slogan adopted, after Abel Gance, by the author of one of the most hair-raising books on the subject that have appeared for a long time – one of those works that might indeed persuade us that the age of books is at an end.⁸ But the author, after piling up half a dozen errors of logic in the first six pages with enviable phlegm, has begun by p 12 to doubt the importance of sight. 'For centuries', he writes, apparently in all seriousness, 'the sentence from Horace's *Epistles*: "That which enters by the hearing impresses the soul less vividly than that which enters by the faithful eyes" was taken as an axiom. It was discredited by Shakespeare . . . and Marshall McLuhan.'⁹ Now the Master has given the word, it is time to call a truce and pronounce the magic formula which will reconcile the feeble sense of sight and the powerful sense of hearing: AUDIO-VISUAL! The civilisation of sight and sound is with us at last. So our ancestors were deaf and blind: they had no eyes to see the paintings in the Sistine Chapel or to admire Epinal prints, no ears to hear *Les Indes Galantes* or Béranger's songs. And above all, they were tragically ignorant of the advantages of combining music with form and colour. So of course, no-one went to see *Oedipus* at the Panathenaen festivals: there was not a single soul at the Tuileries to see Molière's actors taking flight on the machines constructed for

Psyché, speaking lines by Corneille, Molière and Quinault, to a musical accompaniment by Lulli; there was no one to see, listen to and meditate upon *Tristan and Isolde*: Wagner and his theory of the synthesis of the arts were doubtless nothing but an illusion fostered by the henchmen of Gutenberg. . . .

In point of fact, though one may find it difficult to see how any historian worthy of the name could maintain such a patently fabricated case for five minutes, it is easy to see what epistemological effect it produces, and what ideological aim it serves:

(1) On the one hand, the supporters of the McLuhanite case make use of certain superficial analogies in order to claim that 'photography, radio, television and cinema are indissociable', without asking themselves whether, for example, photography does not have more in common with painting or drawing than with radio, and without seeing that in lumping together all these media on the basis of what are, when all is said and done, secondary characteristics, of a purely technical, or imprecisely sociological nature, they are not falling into the very trap they claim to be avoiding, and losing sight of the specificity of the cinema. For what methodological interest can there be in knowing that the cinema rests upon the principle of imprinting images on light-sensitive film, like photography, or registering sounds, like radio? It is just as if one were to claim that newspapers, pornographic books, autograph books, Christmas wrappings and lottery tickets were indissociable and ought to be studied together because they are all made of paper. (Or should one say: because they all use the papiro-visual medium?) The necessary consequence of this type of obscurantism (as, one suspects, its proponents are well aware) is that the real issues get side-stepped, and a process of exorcism is brought to bear on the mysterious powers governing art, which consists, as we shall go on to demonstrate, in reducing it to its material dimensions; ie to the same nullity¹⁰ of meaning as its supportive mechanisms.

(2) This fetishisation of the cathode ray or the Hertzian wave is by no means an innocent phenomenon. Like positivism, of which it is a bastard form (and to which one might say it stands in the same relationship as *Planète* does to Herbert Spencer), it corresponds ideologically to a certain stage in the development of industrial society. The audio-visual ideology (with its Teilhard de Chardin-cum-McLuhanesque halo) is to the capitalism of the sixties what Jules Verne was to the capitalism of the 1840s. It also has the subsidiary but not inconsiderable advantage of supplying right-wing 'thinkers' of the Poujadist stamp with a new way of attacking intellectualism. The modern representative of this type, the 'self-made man who had to start earning his living very young', suffers under the same inferiority complex as his predecessor, 'the small shop-owner who could not go to college', towards intellectuals of the academic or artistic type, whom he perceives as

arrogant: hence the enthusiasm with which this class has seized on to the opportunity of attacking them through the mythical symbol of their superiority: the book.¹¹ It is no chance that, as the author quoted above writes, with a candour that would be charming if it were not an unconscious confession of an ideological manoeuvre: 'The prestige [of McLuhan] is growing all the time among industrialists and business men. . . .'¹² The theme of the image dethroning the book, when it is not the product of a search for a striking paradox,¹³ is simply one of the latest additions to the long, long line of petit-bourgeois, anti-intellectualist fantasies.

(II) The second of the two viewpoints on cinema teaching which we are venturing to take issue with here is basically related to the same ideology as the first. This viewpoint, which we might call the 'sociologistic', because of its dangerously reductivist bias, based on a pathological inflation of the pretensions of sociology, consists in the first instance of assuming that the cinema is, above all, a 'means of mass communication'. Charles Ford describes it, in the very first sentence of his Introduction, as the most powerful of the 'mass media'¹⁴ (another magic formula). But, after Hitler's broadcasts, didn't people believe that radio was the most powerful mass medium? And then, after the televised debate between Kennedy and Nixon, or General de Gaulle's charismatic appearances on the ORTF, didn't television take over the pride of place? Apparently not. Suddenly the cinema has found itself propelled (as has happened in a good number of American universities) into strange departments of Telecommunication, or just plain Communication(s), or Communications Arts, or Social Communications. What a lot of communication is going on suddenly! Unhappily – if one accepts the definition of communication put forward by one of the most zealous partisans of this approach¹⁵ – the cinema is the place in which the least communication takes place. While there is a real and profound exchange (sometimes noisy, sometimes secret) between the actors in a play (whether it is a 'happening' or not) and the musicians at a concert (whether it is a 'pop' concert or not) and their audience, and the latter can even have a considerable effect on the performance, nothing of this type happens in the cinema. Even television has some lines of communication with its audience, especially in North America where there are a good number of shows in which there is a direct telephone link between viewers and the people on the programme. But the cinema is a *one-way means of 'communication'*. The only exchange which takes place at the cinema – which can scarcely be regarded as communication – is when the member of the public hands over his money at the box office and gets a ticket in exchange, or when he gives a tip to the usherette, in the underdeveloped countries where they still exist.

So much for communication. What about the masses? The only shadow of a justification that the supporters of the 'idea' that the

cinema is a 'mass art' are able to advance in its favour is that films are projected in public halls. Unless of course one is prepared to accept 'arguments' such as the one with which Charles Ford begins his inimitable essay: 'The cinema constitutes the quintessence of all the arts, and all public entertainment;¹⁶ *that is why* the film, whether projected or shown on television, *must be* considered the most powerful of the mass media.'¹⁷ (Vegetable soup is a mixture of numerous ingredients; *that is why* vegetable soup *must be* considered the world's most widely-eaten food.) To return to the question of the public halls: 'In the darkened halls', the Rioux Report declares with superb aplomb, 'people are governed by the laws of group reaction.'¹⁸ First assumption.¹⁹ Which only goes to show – guess what? – that the cinema is a mass art. Nobody stops to consider whether the theory of the cinema as a mass medium can, in this definition, accommodate the fact that a film can be seen by a single person in an empty cinema, or in front of a television or on a videotape machine, or else not be seen at all for want of a cinema that will show it; or the fact that a film may be made without any thought of the 'public' – or even in opposition to the public: for a group of friends (underground movies) or for a handful of solitary clients (pornography). Finally nobody takes account of the fact that even when a film is projected in a crowded hall it speaks '*individually, to each one of us, in an isolation fostered by darkness*' – to use Roger Boussinot's excellent description, contained in the extremely important little essay entitled '*Le Cinéma est Mort, Vive le Cinéma*' (The Cinema is Dead, Long Live the Cinema),²⁰ which is highly recommended as a follow-up and conclusion to our own de-mystification of the mass media. One last word: even if the cinema were what a scattering of people are trying to make us believe it is: a 'mass art' or a 'mass means of communication', what real interest would there be in studying it at any length as such? Are we to put it on the same plane as fishing, hockey or shaking hands? – Strictly speaking, we should, as all are mass arts or mass means of communication. Such a course would result in losing sight entirely of the specificity of the cinema: And why claim that the cinema, in particular, has had a revolutionary effect on our civilisation when, from that point of view, there are numerous books that have done the same? Which has had the more 'massive' influence: *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad* or the Bible? *La Chambre Blanche*²¹ or the *Little Red Book*? Or, to take a less obvious comparison: how does a Western compare as a piece of mass-communication with *Le Petit Albert*, millions of copies of which were sold by hawkers to the troops in the French and Belgian campaigns of the nineteenth century? And what about paintings? Charles Ford (again!) has the imprudence to remark that: 'A film made in Hollywood, Paris or Tokyo can be seen by people all over the world, at home; they need do no more than stretch out a hand [*sic*], whereas a Japanese or

an American who wants to gaze on the Mona Lisa has to come to Paris.' Whereas in fact the Mona Lisa has been to New York and Tokyo, while the large part of Japan's enormous yearly film output never comes to Paris. Actually, thanks to art books and postcards it is easier for pictures to reach a wide public than it is for films.

To summarise: it is doubtless interesting (anything can be interesting) for someone in a Department of Telecommunications or Social Communications to compare a film to an electric train or a telephone message; but it is not easy to see how this would help us to understand the gesture which Claudia makes with her hand to Sandro towards the end of *L'Avventura*, the metaphorical role of montage in Eisenstein's *Strike*, the socio-existential importance of the spoken word in Pierre Perrault's films, or the political stake in the latest films by Godard.

(3) The last viewpoint on cinema studies which it is necessary to refute is the most academically ludicrous of the lot, and – even though it is current in certain cinema 'schools' – we should be astonished to find many defenders for it in a university, even in the present state of things. It is the one, automatically adopted by the profiteers of the cinema world – who Roger Boussinot, for example, attacks with such vigour,²³ and which consists in treating the film, just like a pair of socks or a pound of lard, as a commodity, not a work of art. As film teaching worthy of the name it rates about as high as the *empeira* of the Sophists does to the Platonic *episteme*. Let us call it the *plutocratic* viewpoint, and say no more about it.

In our opinion, cinema study will only deserve a place in the university if it can be rigorously and methodically conducted. It cannot and must not be treated as a mere academic diversion, a sub-discipline devoted to insipid exchange of views and banal pseudo-sociology. The ideal film teaching programme must indeed include discussion of the social dimension of the phenomenon, and will need to make use of the existing audio-visual services, but its priority must be the study of film as a cultural creation, an art, a system of symbolic devices and an ideological product. It should not aim to turn out technicians capable of confecting advertising films or businessmen capable of exploiting the commercial possibilities of the medium and the public, so much as teachers, historians, critics or even simple *cinéphiles*. This viewpoint on cinema study, which we will call the 'cultural', for want of a better term, and also to distinguish it from those which are based on a profound antipathy to culture, cannot neglect any of the instruments of analysis and research offered by disciplines centred on comparable cultural objects (literary studies, art history, etc). Like those disciplines, cinema study will thus be able to contribute to the great work of interpreting the totality of social phenomena so urgently called for, each in his own way, by such thinkers as Marx, Freud, Saussure, Francastle and Panofsky.

1. Ferdinand de Saussure: *Cours de Linguistique Générale*, 3rd ed, Payot (Paris), 1965, p 24.

2. For instance, at Northwestern University, Illinois, which is one of the best-known of American universities for film teaching, students attending the important foundation course ('Introduction to Film') in the Radio, Television and Cinema Department of the School of Speech, besides receiving instruction in film aesthetics, the 'technology' of film, the history of the cinema and the social function of cinema, also attend a series of lessons on 'The Business of Film', under the headings: (1) What does the film do?; (2) How much do films cost and how are they financed?; (3) The 35mm film industry; (4) The 16mm film industry; (5) The television industry. (Information supplied by Professor Jack C. Ellis.) Also, at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia di Roma, alongside the sections on 'direction', 'acting', 'film photography', 'sound recording', 'décor' and 'costume' there is one on 'production' (*direzione di produzione*) which gives a grounding in general and company law, mathematics, accounting, etc.

3. There is one exception: the 'Institut de Formation Cinématographique', founded in Paris in 1967 by Noël Burch, Jean-André Fieschi and Daniel Manciet. Its staff includes the writers Jean Ricardou and Claude Ollier, the painter and film-maker Lapoujade, and film-makers or cinema technicians such as Alain Resnais, Jacques Rivette, Jean Rouch, André S. Labarthe, Jean Badel, Georges Lendi, Noun Serra. Then again, as we know, there have been attempts to establish film teaching at Vincennes, Nanterre and the Institute of Art and Archeology, but unfortunately these attempts have so far been very limited. That cinema studies should remain in such an underdeveloped state at the university, whereas in cultural life (in the widest sense) the cinema is assuming ever greater quantitative and qualitative importance, is not a phenomenon that is confined to France. Even in the USA the situation is far from adequate. In 1963 and 1964, for instance, Donald Staples and Jack C. Ellis counted, in the 100 principal colleges and universities of the country, a total of 825 courses relating in some way, whether directly or by extension, to the cinema. But the majority of these were either concerned with audio-visual aids or production; only 148 (ie less than 18 per cent) could be placed under the heading 'history, criticism, appreciation' ('The Study of Motion Pictures in Colleges and Universities' in *The Educational Record*, Winter 1965, published by The American Council of Education, Washington: Appendix A, Table 1, p 65.) In 1967, out of 332 colleges or universities offering summer courses on 'Communications Media', only fourteen had courses on the cinema proper ('Motion Pictures'). (Figures as published in the 1967 Directory of Summer Session Courses on Educational Media, edited by Wanda S. Thompson and Robert A. Cox for The Educational Media Council, Washington.) Conditions today have not changed radically from those which prompted David Stewart to observe, in 1965 (in 'The Study of Motion Pictures . . .', op cit), that on average, for every book a student reads, he sees ten films, but while his institution can offer more than a dozen courses in literature, it is very probable that he will not find a single course in motion picture criticism or history on the curriculum.

4. Essentially in the United States. 'The Study of Motion Pictures . . .' lists 477 courses in audio-visual techniques or cinema production at the 100 major colleges and universities in the USA in 1952-53 and 677 in 1963-64.

5. For example, in France the *ORTF* (French Radio and Television) has several training centres and a research service. In Canada there is the *Office National du Film*, etc.

6. This theme, adroitly popularised by Marshall McLuhan, has been around for a long time. In France, for instance, it was formulated – with a certain brio, it must be admitted – as early as 1962, in an article by François Fontaine in *Preuves*, entitled ‘Feu la Littérature’ (‘The Death of Literature’), the final paragraph of which reads as follows: ‘New literary genres have been discovered, and more flexible rules; various formal tyrannies have been thrown off, but to what effect? Contemporary genius has not been standing still in the meantime; it has been making its own arrangements with the press, television and the cinema. Not that it will break its contracts with the publishers – it will continue to supply them with a more than ample living. But it can never give back to the producers of books the sovereign power that they once had over all means of expressing thought, which has been snatched from them by a technological revolution. *With this revolution, a cycle is closed for ever: that of the monopoly of the written word.* But another cycle is coming into being, and people in the know are already beginning to smell a profit.’ (Italics are mine.)

7. Take for instance the common claim (to quote the Cinema section of the important *Royal Commission of Enquiry on Teaching in the Province of Quebec* – Vol 3, Ch 16, p 101, para 745): ‘the language of the twentieth century is no longer purely verbal’. If one takes the word ‘language’ in its strict sense (bearing in mind Martinet’s criterion of double articulation) this sentence is an absurd one (of the type ‘A is not only A, A participates in non-A’). If one accepts that it is being used in an extended sense (with the almost inevitable result of imprecision) the sentence becomes slightly ludicrous. Were the people of Antiquity or the Renaissance unacquainted with pictures, etc? with gestures? or music? Did they only communicate in words?

It is true that this formula is much less misleading than those of one disciple of McLuhan, who, for example, sees nothing strange in talking about ‘visual thought’ (as opposed, of course, to ‘verbal thought’), doubtless unaware that there are few serious psychologists who would maintain today that there can be any thought without language. We also thought (wrongly, it appears) that Roland Barthes had sufficiently demonstrated that ‘there can be no meaning without a name’ (*Communications*, No 4. Seuil, Paris, 1964, Introduction).

There is another phrase in the Report quoted above that needs to be taken issue with: ‘[in the twentieth century] an object, even a commonplace one, speaks by its very presence.’ The ineffable again; why don’t we admit that is what it is? But why make this mode of non-mediated communication the prerogative of twentieth-century man, predominantly Western man? Did not the Chinese of the eleventh century also have direct access to the ‘language’ of objects? – the astonishing Mi Nan-Kong for example, who could sit for hours so deeply absorbed in the contemplation of an ordinary stone that he forgot the duties of his office. (On this subject, see Roger Caillois’ recent, fine work, particularly *Pierres*, Gallimard, Paris, 1966.)

8. Charles Ford: *Caméra et Mass Media*, Mame (Paris), 1970.

9. Of whom the author says (p 15): ‘his shining trail is now fading over the new world, and coming to illuminate the cultural criticism of our old continent’ (what exactly is cultural criticism? . . .). In any case the reader will not fail to have been moved by the grandiose, and no doubt extremely audio-visual conception of a joint attack on Horace by Shakespeare and Marshall McLuhan.

10. Or, at the very best, low level.

11. One is astonished to discover a reaction of this kind (albeit in attenuated form) in the Rioux report on the Teaching of Arts in Quebec, published in Canada in 1963. In the course of an attempt to persuade.

their readers that an enormous apprenticeship is required in order to be able to project slides or play records in class, the authors of the report exclaim, with triumphant contempt: 'For the present, the majority of teachers are *audio-visually under-developed!*' (Vol 2, Part 5, p 262, end of para 627). (Italics are mine.)

12. Charles Ford, *op cit*, p 15.

13. As in François Fontaine's article in *Preuves*, quoted above.

14. Charles Ford, *op cit*, p 9.

15. Charles Ford again, p 163 of his *opus*. His definition of communication, incidentally, is one borrowed from the pronouncement of Vatican 11 'Inter Mirifica' of 1963: 'coming-together, exchange, uniting link'.

16. Even this is questionable: for instance, what does one say about types of entertainment in which the cinema is just one of many ingredients (happenings, light shows)?

17. *Op cit*, p 9. I have added italics, to mark the successive stages of the 'argument'.

18. *Op cit*, Vol I, pt 278, p 158.

19. In fact, all the evidence is against it. Why should the cinema be a group phenomenon whereas television is not? If one studies the assumption carefully, it will be seen to imply that a film is not the same when it is watched in a cinema, as it is when seen on television; so film teachers would have to prepare two separate classes on every film. . . . And also it presupposes a person sitting alone in front of a television, as opposed to another in a crowded cinema. But suppose one reverses this situation, and imagines the first person to be watching television at home with the family or in a café, and the second to be in an empty cinema. Where would one notice the most 'collective reactions'? (Rioux, *ibid*, pt 230.) And there are more and more cinemas in which even the slightest whisper is not allowed, whereas it is perfectly normal to exchange loud comments on television programmes while they are in progress. Finally, which means of mass communication arouses 'group reactions': the film – in which Bergman or Antonioni addresses himself to me 'from individual consciousness to individual consciousness' as Georges Poulet would say – or the televised political speech, which is addressed to me only in so far as I am part of a vast general whole? The failure of most pseudo-sociological analysis of this type generally lies in the fact that the authors have only thought about a certain type of cinema (commercial cinema of the 1930–50 Hollywood type). The failure of this analysis lies in the fact that its authors have not thought about anything at all.

20. Denoël, Paris 1967, *Collection Lettres Nouvelles*, p 11 et seq. Boussinot's highly pertinent observations deal a salutary blow to any number of distinguished mass-medialogues, including the Holy Fathers of Vatican 11 and Pope Pius XI, brought in by Ford to back up his case (*op cit*, p 21).

21. A film by the Quebec director Jean-Pierre Lefebvre.

22. *Op cit*, p 21.

23. *Op cit*, pp 20–32 and *passim*.

APPENDIX

In order to exemplify the above, we have outlined some introductory courses (or series of seminars) on the cinema which could be organised in a university.

(1) What is a film? *There are three possible (chrono)logical approaches to the cinema. In the first, the field of study is the totality of cinematographic works created since 1895; this is the*

approach adopted by film historians. The second is also historical but meta-empirical, taking as its object of study a single, imaginary film, and following the process of its production from the script (or the initial synopsis) through to its first screening. Finally, the third approach analyses the completed film, as a given composite of visuals and sounds; that is to say, it decomposes the film into its principal elements, whether simultaneous or successive.

This would be a foundation course, in both senses of the word. It would be based on the last two approaches; to use Saussure's terminology, it would adopt a diachronic and a synchronic point of view, sometimes successively, sometimes together.

It would be both practical and theoretical. In no case would teaching be conducted exclusively in the abstract. It would consistently be backed up by visual illustrations (film clips) and practical demonstrations (handling of equipment). But on the other hand, the equipment would not be allowed to rule the course. Dexterity is not the same as thought. For instance, it would not be normal practice in such a context to teach students to edit a film without immediately moving on to the theoretical (rhetorical, aesthetic, ideological) problems of montage.

The course would be in two parts: the first predominantly technical; the second predominantly analytic. The first should give students the ability or the desire to make a film; the second, to see (or rather to read) a film.

1st part: diachronic point of view (the making of a film).

The script (what is a script? The problems of adapting literary works for the cinema; films which have no script: news films, ethnological films, 'cinéma-verité', etc). The shooting script. Shooting the film. (1) The problems of direction: location, props, lighting; the actors. (2) The equipment: the movie camera; the lens, the view-finder, the light-meter, reverse motion, adjustable shutter, shutter-release, coupled range-finder; the stock - 70mm, 35mm, 16mm, 8mm, black and white, colour.) The editing. The problems of sound (the equipment, synchronised sound, post-synchronisation, etc). The problems of production and distribution. Projection. The problems of film preservation.

2nd part: synchronic point of view (structure of a film).

Structure of the film as a whole: film-space and film-time, as expressed in the sequence and structure of shots. The sequence and the shot (long shots, medium long shots, medium shots, 'Italian' and 'American' style shots, medium close-up and close-up). The problems of editing: ellipses, linking, overall plan, 'tricks'.

Structure of the shot or the image: camera movements (pans; forwards, backwards, lateral, circular and panoramic travelling shots, whip pans, distorted pans, optical travelling shots). Camera

angles (tilt, low-angle, reverse). Focus; choice of depth, getting a picture in focus. Framing. Composition. Lighting and colour (from the formal point of view, organisation of areas of brightness; harmonisation of colours).

(2) History of the cinema: This course is fairly straightforward, in so far as its subject-matter is predefined: all the films – or rather all the essential films – that have been made since the invention of the cinema. (But one has, of course, to define what one regards as essential.) However, we might make three recommendations: (a) It is not at all necessary to cover everything: three years would certainly not be enough for such a programme. Private work on the part of the students could play an important part here. They could be referred, for essential background information, to the big histories of the cinema (Sadoul, Mitry, etc) and classes could be devoted to more detailed study of special periods (eg the Russian cinema from 1925 to 1935), aesthetic movements (eg the French avant garde of the twenties; Italian neo-realism), or film-makers who are thought to be particularly important, and (this is vital) particularly relevant to the preceding course, in that they cast especial light on the technical and theoretical problems it will have raised.

(b) For this reason, it would be a good thing if the two courses could be run in conjunction with each other.

(c) The danger with history courses in general, and film history courses in particular, if they are centred around key periods, is that they tend to gather speed as they go along. For instance, the pioneers of the cinema will be studied in depth; the great silent film-makers fairly thoroughly, the first talkies rather more rapidly, and the contemporary cinema at top speed, if at all. Yet the contemporary cinema merits more attention, and also it is the period that most of the students know best, and the films are the easiest to see outside of the university. So it would be desirable to have a schedule, worked out, and stuck to rigorously, so that Jean-Luc Godard and Andy Warhol are not systematically sacrificed to Lumière and Méliès.

(3) Introduction to cinema criticism: This course would have two sides: (a) A preliminary practical side: what are the tools of film criticism? Filmographies, monographs, magazines, film institutes. Learning to use these tools constitutes the first stage of criticism: finding out the facts. (b) The other side is criticism proper. The students learn to decode and interpret a cinematic work. This would involve close study of a few selected examples. Content: levels of meaning (cf Panofsky: Meaning in the Visual Arts). Formal description. Structural analysis. Thematic analysis. The different critical viewpoints ('content' criticism, 'formal' criticism; possible resolution of the antagonistic viewpoints at a higher level; the idea of form, in the meaning given it by Hjelmslev

(4) What is the cinema? *Theoretical course*. Is the cinema a 'language'? *The linguistic sign and the cinematic quasi-sign* (cf Christian Metz: *Essais sur la Signification au Cinéma*; G. Bettetini: *Cinema, Lingua e Struttura*). Meaning in the cinema: *denotation and connotation*. *Is there a rhetoric of images?* (analysis of figurative devices: *metaphor, ellipsis, syllepsis*). The impression of reality in the cinema. The cinema among the arts (*cinema and painting, photography, music, etc*).

(5) Cinema and literature: *This course could attack such problems as: writers who are also film-makers* (Cocteau, Robbe-Grillet, Pasolini . . .). *Literary cinema* (Rohmer . . .) and *filmed literature*. *Is cinema a form of para-literature?* *The similarities and dissimilarities between the two means of expression*. *Writers who see* (Flaubert). *Etc*.

(6) Cinema and society: the social 'within' the cinematographic (*myths and the mythology of the cinema, ideology and cinema*) and the cinema in society (*the cinema as industry and commerce, the myth of the cinema as 'mass art'; is the cinema a means of 'communication'?* McLuhan and demystification of McLuhan. *The cinema audience. Cinema and television*).

Translated by Susan Bennett

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Elective Affinities
The Myth of German Expressionism

Andrew Tudor

Received wisdom has it that there is a distinct something called German expressionism. Specifically, that between the end of the Great War and the beginnings of the Third Reich the German cinema produced a 'movement'. Maybe even that it *was* a movement. It is unfortunate that the signs by which such an event is to be recognised are not entirely clear. Received wisdom is not too helpful in this respect, usually limiting the field to only two further cases. Along with German expressionism we are offered the Soviet cinema of the 'twenties and post-war Italian neo-realism. From this limited universe we can only infer what implicit criteria are in operation, coming up, roughly, with a set of three. Most obviously, although movements in other arts are on occasion alleged to transcend national boundaries, the extant applications of the term in film are all national cases. On top of this – perhaps as part of it – we find that all the societies in question first experienced some sort of socio-cultural trauma: two world wars and a revolution. Lastly, the products of the periods are in some way, however superficial, highly distinctive. It is barely an exaggeration to suggest that one could recognise their respective styles from a mile away and through the wrong end of a telescope.

It is a reasonable working hypothesis that these three factors have together persuaded critics to talk about film movements. It may be that the term originated in the need for respectability, as a critical legitimator. The very word has dynamic connotations attached to it. And certainly the identification of the Soviet and German cases was deeply involved in the larger critical arguments about the notion of cinema as art. In this context it would be intelligible if there were a strong extra-cinematic impetus to using the label. Rightly or wrongly it has a respectable aesthetic ring. But what does it suggest besides? Clearly not simply the presence of the three elements I distinguished as criteria. If that were all we could speak of: the post-war, *English* cinema, complete with a *shared style* of considerable dullness, as a movement. The British neo-flaccid perhaps? In fact two further criteria seem to be operating. First the critic must conceive the films as somehow artistically

important; either positively valued (eg Bazin on neo-realism) or negatively valued (eg Bazin on German expressionism). Secondly it must be possible to make some sort of plausible argument showing the relation between the historic events and the ideology and techniques employed. In effect to demonstrate the presence of a unified *Weltanschauung*, world-view, or style (all of which I shall employ interchangeably without apology!) which relates to some aspect of social (often read 'mass-psychological') context. If these secondary criteria are met then we have a movement.

This obviously raises all sorts of problems, not least because we are lacking a sophisticated language in which we can handle this relation between style and social context. Generally the problem has been approached in terms of elective affinities, more elaborately what Goldmann has referred to as 'homology of structure'. Such arguments can, of course, be applied to the artistic products of any society. The alleged movements differ in this respect only in their apparent obtrusiveness. World wars, revolutions, communism, fascism, distorted sets and montage cutting techniques have a certain obviousness to recommend them. The German case especially has proved inviting, both wars, the years of German crisis, and the rise of Hitler figuring prominently. Its status as an extensively discussed phenomenon plus its intrinsic interest make it a valuable case to reconsider in this present context.

The two main studies of the German period are illuminating in more than the obvious and intended ways. Both Kracauer's *From Caligari to Hitler* and Lotte Eisner's *The Haunted Screen** yield up not just extensive information (which they do) but also perhaps the beginnings of some methodological lessons. Both of them want to probe more deeply the mass of relations between national culture, historic event, and cinematic style. Eisner even has a frontispiece quotation from Leopold Ziegler beginning, 'German man is the supreme example of demoniac man'. Both are in some ways peculiarly mystic: the one in a psychoanalytic vein, the other a little more traditionally metaphysical. Both persistently have reference to the German soul and its alleged propensities, a usage which might be more intelligible as an insufficient version of the German *Geist*. Eisner goes as far as 'explanations' couched in terms like 'The German soul instinctively prefers twilight to daylight' (p 51)! Kracauer, less flowery if more tortured, comes up with 'The masses are irresistibly attracted by the spectacle of torture and humiliation' (p 217) or 'The German soul . . . tossed about in gloomy space like the phantom ship in *Nosferatu*' (p 107). More clinically his intention is to see the cinema of the first four years of the 'twenties as providing a *monologue intérieur* which gives us access to ' . . . almost inaccessible layers of the German mind' (p 60).

* Princeton University Press, 1947, and Thames & Hudson, 1969, respectively.

Similarly the cinema of the later more stable years is an exemplification of mass tendencies toward retrogression. In the end the German film becomes the effective *reductio* of Nazism. In part this is related to Kracauer's general naturalistic aesthetic: for him, film is the 'redemption of physical reality'. An expressionistic denial of this tenet could thus hardly be related to something socially good!

Obviously both discussions rest on a combination of beliefs about the true nature of the German psyche and a partly implicit evaluation of the films themselves. Kracauer's Romantic Naturalism leads very easily to the view that the German silent cinema is the expression of an unhealthy psyche. He is happy to argue the relation between distorted films, sick minds, and social pathology. Lotte Eisner, in contrast, is less practically focused. She seems happier dressing up her sensitive appreciation of the nuances of visual style with one or two standard stereotypes of the German psyche. After all, *she* likes the movies. Put in such a position the pressures against attempting to develop detailed relations between the films and their uneasy social context must be considerable. Much less disturbing to invoke the traditional German *angst*.

This difference in focus at the level of social and psychological context leads to other differences. Kracauer's detailed interest in questions of ideology leads him to neglect stylistic phenomena in favour of plot analysis. His main concern, only intermittently adorned with comments on style, is with the socio-psychological implications of the narrative. Stylistic elements are only invoked as passing support; he provides no proper basis for a truly general analysis of the styles in question. In total contrast Lotte Eisner is above all concerned with visual style; she tries to map the course of a wide range of influences. Kracauer's approach, as one might expect, appears to offer more immediate returns, if only because the language in which we habitually discuss narrative is the same language normally used to formulate ideological positions. But in the long run Eisner's may be the more useful strategy. There are undoubtedly important relations to be investigated between formal style, narrative, and socio-political ideology. Kracauer himself points to some such when it suits him to do so. But a prior requirement of such analysis – analysis fundamental to the notion of a movement – lies in isolating the style in question. And here we do meet difficulties in that we do not have an adequate language in which to discuss cinematic style. As Eisner's study demonstrates, the attraction of the German silent film has lain partly in its amenability to analysis in terms borrowed from art criticism. No cinema has ever got nearer to 'pictures brought to life'. This has been both an advantage and a disadvantage. Certainly the language is there to borrow. But in borrowing it we have tended to use labels effectively unsuited to the final cinematic product. Along with the identification of a 'movement' in the German silent cinema we have found the label 'expressionism' borrowed from elsewhere. These two

errors march hand in hand.

To identify the German style, then, it is necessary to identify something we have called 'expressionism'. Now it is notoriously difficult to use the standard definitions. Most dictionaries, for instance, stress the use of distortion to artistically render (disturbed) psychological states. The usual exemplar is Edvard Munch's lithograph 'Shrik', though Van Gogh is also frequently invoked as an honourable ancestor. But such a definition is extraordinarily broad, and certainly insufficiently discriminating for the purpose at hand. All art involves some form of 'distortion': Eisenstein's montage could be as much 'expressionistic' as Weine's wilder moments. As to rendering psychological states, again the field is very large indeed. Clearly this expressionism alleged to be a movement must have some sharper distinction to offer.

The obvious starting point lies in the self-conscious statements of the expressionist theoreticians, though in the absence of facility and space I can do little more than use them as a point of departure. They were anyway by no means lacking in elaborate metaphysic and sectarian schism. Nevertheless the notion of abstraction seems to be a common key; as Eisner suggests: 'The declared aim of the expressionists was to eliminate nature and attain absolute abstraction' (p 151). These two – anti-naturalism and abstraction – were evidently not unrelated, but for the moment let me look at abstraction. In more general contexts the term is used in reference to a process of knowing the world, of cognitively organising the 'chaos' surrounding man. In effect, as an epistemological weapon against something aptly christened 'ontological terror'. By isolating the elements of our world and analysing them in their abstract singularity we render nature more intelligible as an abstract and simplified picture. Eisner quotes from the 1921 doctoral thesis of Wilhelm Worringer who translates such an argument to the field of aesthetics. In so doing he provides a justification/explanation of expressionism as 'expressionistic abstraction'.

Even now the category remains very general: there are many ways in which 'expressionistic abstraction' might be made manifest. Classic montage is still an obvious candidate and some of Eisenstein's theorising is not so far from that historically labelled expressionist. *Strike* and *October* are just as much 'expressionistically abstract' as the in-frame distortions of *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* or *Raskolnikov*. Abstraction alone is not sufficient. To specify the question further we must return to the second aim noted by Eisner: anti-naturalism. In particular, an anti-naturalism which condemns both straightforward naturalistic reproduction and the particular 'distortions' of impressionism. Reduced to the level of slogans: Naturalism seeks to copy exactly; Impressionism to expressively re-create; Expressionism to go beyond these surfaces to 'eternal meanings'. This anti-naturalism plus abstraction leads to a visual aesthetic based on freeing the object (abstraction) from

its *natural* environment. This is not simply what Bazin thinks of as a destruction of the normal sense of space; montage can be just as guilty of this. It involves substituting a distorted nature in which the object can be seen to be abstracted. That is, it involves going the whole hog!

This sort of doctrine, then, led to the visual style of spatial distortion, and to an acting style which isolated key elements by virtue of exaggeration. But with the possible exception of *Caligari* a pure version of this expressionist style is hard to find in the cinema. Two other elements overlaid its pristine form. The influence of Reinhardt's theatre, in particular his 'impressionist' lighting techniques and group compositions, softened the jagged expressionistically derived designs. This influence is extensively documented by Lotte Eisner. And on top of this there remains the question of German culture; the phenomenon Kracauer and Eisner like to speak of in terms of soul, psyche, and spirit. For the moment can we simply remark the presence of an apparently well-established tradition of chiaroscuro with its concomitant thematic obsessions. To explore its social and cultural dynamics is far beyond my present scope. Taken together these four elements – ideally if not in practice – make up a stylistic conglomerate of two tangled threads. The one derives from the harsh distortions, exaggerations and abstractions of 'pure expressionism'; the other from the shadings, half-tones, and ambiguities of the chiaroscuro tradition. It is the variously successful combination of the two which is to be found in Murnau's *Nosferatu*, Wegener's *Der Golem*, Lang's *Die Nibelungen* and the rest.

Given the presence of two distinct, if apparently complementary, traditions, where does this lead in our discussion of the larger contextual issue? In particular, can any case be made at the level of thematic affinities? I think it can. We have seen that 'pure expressionism' is consciously dedicated to destroying the fabric of the visible experienced world to discover the essence beneath. In this posture it must needs be against the *status quo* of whatever situation in which it finds itself. For the *status quo* depends on accepting that which is normally conceived to be 'nature'; in art the establishment has always leaned in a naturalistic direction preferring expressionism to cubism, impressionism to expressionism, naturalism to impressionism, and so on. But 'pure expressionism' is rooted in an attempt to destroy the basis of this conventional *Weltanschauung*. In the words of one of its ideologues it is itself '... neither a fad nor a movement; it is a *Weltanschauung*'. Place this impetus in the context in which the German cinema existed and its anti-establishment stance could compromise its tendency to abstraction to result in an anti-bourgeois narrative. The end of the extreme position is an abstract cinema, a position seriously mitigated by commercial pressure. But given these pressures to compromise it still remains a fundamental of the 'pure' tradition that

The chiaroscuro tradition does not have such clear implications. Indeed, at the level of my discussion of the expressionist element it is effectively neutral. But it does, of course, have a propensity for invoking a certain air of mystery, for lending a certain eeriness to its subjects. Lang has excelled at this not only in his German period but throughout his American career: even a standard pot-boiler like *The Return of Frank James* is indelibly marked in this way. But such a style has some affinity at least – though by no means a necessary conjunction – with certain subjects: in particular with super- or sub-natural ('underworld' movies) subjects. (The American thriller and the classic 'supernatural' film share more in common than simply their lighting techniques.) Given ordinary subjects, this particular manipulation of light renders them somehow extraordinary; given extraordinary subjects, as in so much early German cinema, and the style excels. The most subtle exponent of the chiaroscuro tradition is Murnau; so subtle that Bazin is happy to distinguish him as the carrier of the realist tradition on the basis of *Nosferatu* let alone *The Last Laugh*. By comparison with the spatial distortion of the expressionist designs this second tradition – regardless of its frequently 'supernatural' themes – is relatively speaking naturalistic. Where 'pure expressionism' undermines the 'real' world in the very basis of its style, at the level of *Weltanschauung*, chiaroscuro does so, if anywhere, at the level of subject. And even here the stress is not on the destruction of the given world but on including the supernatural as part and parcel of the natural environment.

In German film looked at from the perspective of these two traditions the extremes are represented by *Caligari* and *Nosferatu*. (Though Dreyer's *Vampyr* is probably the real embodiment of chiaroscuro.) For the most part, however, the German silent film uses an eclectic mixture of these styles. Even the alleged expressionist classic, *Caligari*, is not quite what it seems. At the risk of boring repetition, let me repeat what Kracauer and others have established about the history of this particular movie.

Mayer and Janowitz, the writers of the original story, intended the film to fulfil the then current expressionist task of attacking bourgeois authority. To this end *Caligari* himself – both fairground showman and director of the asylum – was the objectionable and perverting symbol of authority; Cesare his uncomprehending victim. Finally this insane authority is overcome and *Caligari* carried off in a straitjacket. Lang (originally scheduled as director), Weine (who finally directed, Lang being otherwise committed), and the powers that be at Decla-Bioscop agreed on a framing story within which the Mayer-Janowitz story was presented as the dreaming of an inmate of the asylum. *Caligari-as-doctor* then becomes a benevolent father figure concerned only to cure the insane Francis. In this way the original intention was inverted and, in Kracauer's

words, ' . . . a revolutionary film was thus turned into a conformist one ' (p 67). But the critics were to enthuse over the brilliant way in which the expressionist distortions conveyed (what they thought to be) the convolutions of a sick mind. Indeed, this expressionism becomes the dictionary definition: distortion to expose the workings of a disturbed mind. But in so doing it becomes a technique rather than a style; an isolated fragment rather than a *Weltanschauung*. And as Kracauer rather gleefully notes, the film anyway confounds itself. The logic of this diluted expressionism is the now standard logic for presenting dream sequences as distinct from 'real' sequences. The distortions imply that these scenes are dreams, hallucinations, or whatever. But even the 'real' world of the framing story in *Caligari* is presented in visually expressionistic terms which, of course, undermines the whole idea that the expressionistic elements are there to communicate Francis' insane visions. What we are left with is a commercial exploitation of a current artistic fashion grafted onto a story in praise of 'liberal authority'.

Even the original version developed by Mayer and Janowitz is expressionist only in appearance. Kracauer suggests that had the original story been retained unsullied, then the 'drawings brought to life' of the film would have suited it perfectly. This seems at least plausible, but not in the manner of 'pure' expressionism. As we have seen, the doctrine of expressionist abstraction suggests that the style itself fragments and reveals the world. But in *Caligari* as it might have been expressionism is a technique for presenting the world as an evil distorted place in the control of authority figures such as Caligari. The difference is quite important. 'Pure' expressionism leads to an abstract cinema; a cinema which reveals essences in a formal way. If by comparison we talk of the style of Italian neo-realism then we are thinking of more than a technique; this is a *Weltanschauung*, a total world view. Form and content united. Classically expressionism is also intended as *Weltanschauung* in this sense. But in *Caligari* it becomes a set of formal techniques separate from the ideological intent of the film. Even in the original it is only a technique to communicate the alien nature of our world; hardly a style 'allowing us to probe the 'eternal essences'.

Even if *Caligari* were not the evident peculiarity it is, one film would not a movement make. Possibly unlike the Italian and Soviet cases the German silent film seems really to have been a repository for an extraordinary selection of talents and a widely diffuse collection of not altogether compatible styles. Critical thinking has been deluded into according it 'movement' status for a range of reasons. As I have suggested, the invitation to establish loose relations between film and German mass psychoses became altogether too tempting. To do this it was necessary to identify some common uniting characteristic at a formal level as well as analyse discrete thematic interests. More generally, however, the idea has remained

part of standard apparatus because it has become deeply embedded in the long realism debates. One of the major undercurrents of film aesthetics has been the naturalism/distortion issue, and dichotomies of this type thrive on the identification of such original sins as German Expressionism. But the use of conventional distortion is defensible in much of German silent film if not in the desperate failures like *Caligari*; these were marvellously productive years. Indeed, as Lotte Eisner suggests in reference to the work of one of the great directors of the period, G. W. Pabst, reality in film is simply another convention. But that would lead to another story and to yet another myth.

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Violence on the Screen

André Glucksmann (BFI Education Department, 40p)

The contemporary debate about 'violence', a concept which suffers not so much from inadequate delimitation as from the uncertainty of its polemic charge when taken out of context, may be taken as a clear index of the manner in which tensions existing within society at present are distorted and mystified. It is this concern that Glucksmann's *Violence on the Screen* surveys.

This short report consists of a very wide-ranging survey/analysis of research into the significance of violent action in filmed and televised material. Apart from the extensive attention to such essential classics as Hilde Himmelweit's *Television and the Child*, Glucksmann is able to draw on the findings of many French and American researchers, as well as commentators in a position of social influence – the judiciary, various working committees, etc – who have pronounced various opinions on the subject. The book takes a two-level thematic approach – at the level of styles of address to the issue in his chapter headings, and major topics of concern within these major themes. The aim of the report,

to facilitate the effective use of the vast body of work in existence on the effect on young people of violence in the cinema and on television (p 11)

indicates a reference-work function, to which the economy of statement and compact collection of results is very well suited. This is in contrast to the direct field surveys from which much of the material is drawn, where data are often tiresomely repeated for the necessary process of quantitative substantiation.

Glucksmann begins by pointing out that effects studies were stimulated initially by public concern, which was noted as early as the Payne Fund studies of 1930:

The cinema and the radio were considered, like slums, to be a breeding-ground of social disturbance. (p 14)

The survey of opinions which have touched on the subject follows naturally on from this – it is concluded that 'indecisiveness' is the hallmark of known lay opinion, while educationists 'are more severe' and tend to 'denounce the evils' of mass media effects which Glucksmann wryly notes as 'one of the few examples of unanimity we possess'. His interesting analysis of this is that

The fact that different social classes express very different opinions about television seems to point to a strong sociological factor in the judgement (p 19)

but this is not taken any further.

The report then proceeds from studies of watching time as cumulatively influential, stress on which leads to Mirams' stimulus-response notion of 'conditioned reflex' violence and the technique of making breakdowns of types of violent acts represented. Glucksmann concludes that merely observing screen violence is an inadequate determinant of effects in any precise way. Surveys testing direct effects on aggression are now examined, followed by more sophisticated reports (eg Himmelweit) which attend more to the 'displacement effect' of TV reshaping leisure patterns – here again the main impression is that changes in behaviour patterns are less severe than has often been claimed:

Thus it appears television and the cinema displace activities but not values. In particular, television does not introduce violence, it simply takes over from the comics and the radio. (p 30)

Other aspects tackled here are the media functioning as peer-group socialisation factors and the tenuous correlation between cinema/TV and juvenile delinquency.

Less direct links are then examined – those which posit psychological effects of screened action. Mentioned here are controversies about the passive/active roles of viewers, the problem of confusing fact and fiction, and the imitation/catharsis chestnut which have remained central issues for effects researchers.

In a useful chapter on experimental techniques used in studies, Glucksmann notes the methods of observing facial expressions or testing heartbeat and respiration. These psycho-physiological methods are shown to be inconclusive because of a conceptual failure to come to terms with the significance of tension in the viewer, some claiming 'harmful effects' in general terms, others predicting exactly the opposite (ie mimesis v catharsis again). This is precisely the point at which behavioural, 'scientific' studies have to judge the sociological implications of their work – the point at which much simplistic inadequacy of such findings is laid bare:

A distinction has to be made between immediate reactions to the image and the total and lasting effect of the film; behaviour is not a simple adding-up of reactions, any more than a film is just an assembly of isolated images. (p 46)

A quite different style of approach is referred to as the 'cultural' approach, a combination of social theory, aesthetic/literary criticism and psychoanalysis. This seemed to be the obvious direction for research to be channelled into a much higher level of analysis. The essence of the approach is two-sided. First, the significance of subjective individual meanings is stressed – the word 'meaning'

referring to a crucially humanistic assessment of individual autonomy of decision and reflective capability absent in the previous material. Secondly, since no viewer is an isolate and no screened material exists independent of the society from which its producers are drawn, the 'context' (both the social context and also the 'context' of viewers' shared previous experience, with others in the society, of previously screened material of a similar kind) is stressed – hence generic theories of film have substance in the nature of the viewing audience. Thus, violence in the Western must be studied with attention to its existence as a genre:

. . . westerns, like myths, would create their own sphere of thought. (p 53)

Glucksmann's reservations about approaches of this kind is the familiar one of cautious empiricism:

The examples of it produced so far are not scientific, but they are thought-provoking. (p 54)

When such notions as 'symbolic effect' and 'world-views' are introduced, it is clear that we are in another dimension entirely from that of the earlier sections of the report. Glucksmann's general summing-up points out that he has led us through from 'indisputable' quantitative evidence to 'disputable' qualitative interpretation (the 'cultural' approach). His overall concluding statement rightly avoids a bogus effort to come to a falsely synthesising final statement – he ends with the observation that

The objective study – the authors often call it 'scientific' – of the effects of violence on the screen thus lays the foundations for judgement, but must refrain from making the final judgement itself.

The survey of the literature is 'brought up to date' in a style which is faithful to Glucksmann's by Dennis Howitt, appropriately from the Leicester University for Mass Communication Research, where J. D. Halloran's team has been working so productively. In a most interesting and valuable introduction, Paddy Whannell locates the research in the current debate about the media, which he notes beginning with Leavis and Thomson's *Culture and Environment* blanket denunciation of the media and continuing in the discussion of the Crowther and Newsom Reports. This links with his agreeable major point – that educational institutions would do well to pay more attention to film and television. He observes:

Once this crude model of élite versus mass, which has produced so much of the thinking about the media, disappears, new and more creative alliances will emerge. . . . When this has been achieved, we will have gone beyond the simple notion of 'effects'. (p 9)

– a view in which Glucksmann's primarily educational avowed intent is to be seen as instrumental.

The term 'debate' when used to refer to the expression of opinion on this subject is hardly accurate, for, in fact, these arguments rarely come into conflict in a direct dialogue of any significance. This is understandable, since screened material has acted as a variable in the picture of a social dynamic instrumental in the expression of various ideologies. In this regard, the survey is misleading – Glucksmann suggests that 'public opinion is so uncertain'; in fact sectarian interests present themselves always as fully 'certain' whatever the issue – the reification 'public opinion' never exists except in this form and is thus a series of 'certainties', while it is seldom consensual.

Glucksmann's use of the various studies and commentaries available is to stand at some distance above other work, evaluating the more heavyweight, better substantiated studies, from whatever standpoint, and, perhaps inevitably, balancing them out into a moderate careful position in his conclusion. Studies

lead us to doubt very strongly whether screen violence has any *direct* effect on the real behaviour of the young viewer. (p 34)

The criticism that needs to be made is not the simple one that expositions of different pieces of research at an equal level tend to blur discriminations; in fact Glucksmann is remarkably balanced in interpreting tendencies – he orders the material masterfully. It is more that the discussion is at least partly hypostatized in terms of themes, leading to a sliding together at the conceptual level of what are in fact research works at a very different level of analysis. An instance is his use of the distinction, in covering the 'range of opinions' of a distinction between what he designates two 'extreme' positions. These are a dogmatically behaviourist notion of effects propounded by Wertham and a complex argument about the cultural meaning of censorship from Morin. Glucksmann continues:

In between these two 'extreme' positions a series of 'moderate' opinions has grown up. (p 17)

'Extreme' is not an adequate distinction here – readers would wish for a more detailed critique of the two statements used, but, in fact, Morin's position could not be accommodated by any usual notion of 'effects' and has thus to be virtually excluded from further consideration.

At a similar level, the controversial term 'violence' is not itself adequately discussed by Glucksmann. Stanley Cohen (*Phalanx*, Summer 1970) has brilliantly analysed the loaded use of the concept in popular and journalistic contexts, but Glucksmann seems to accept the need for such a blanket term or its particular derivatives 'violent acts' as the given in the input-output model of media effects. When his attention is turned to 'cultural approaches', the lack of this level of analysis becomes a problem which is not

adequately overcome by stress on the unquantifiable nature of the approach and a limited 'aesthetic value' given to the term 'context' – the underlying issue is why 'violence'? This is not a criticism to which the Glucksmann book alone is susceptible. In the UNESCO report *The mass media in a violent world* (1971), contemporary use of the term is given little more than perfunctory attention. Glucksmann's location of 'expert' studies following from the surveys of folk opinion which have been conducted is a correct emphasis and a reminder of the immediacy of the problem to public debate; it does not exist simply as a theoretical issue, but as vital choices, discriminations, moral codes, being made by individuals and groups all the time. The nature and findings of the evidence surveyed are thus shown to be governed by methodological presuppositions (Glucksmann throughout illustrates this repeatedly) which themselves represent systematic re-formulations of these sectarian public attitudes; the cultural dialectic between what is often dismissively regarded as lay opinions and academic preoccupations is revealed most clearly here; hence the focus of attention is on adolescence in spite of the fact that

contrary to what has been said or written, it is the adolescents followed by the children, who make the first moves to get away from its fascination. The adults, much though they may deny it, appear to be much slower in reacting. (p 22)

In this way conflicting world-views and unease about the questioning of the reality of these by other social groups whose values repeatedly filter through the media is projected onto a group who themselves, while not having greater exposure to the media than any other age-group in society, are both in no position at present to formulate a shared ideology about the media themselves and at the same time will have the power to affirm or reject particular pressure-groups' ideology by future action.

As a succinct reference/guide to the enormous literature on the subject of effects, Glucksmann's book is undoubtedly of immense value, and his conclusions, though always tentative, careful and conservative, are closely argued and generally acceptable. In terms of the growing demand for studies of filmed and televised material in educational institutions then, Glucksmann may provide a worthwhile way into what Paddy Whannel in his *Introduction* points out is a field where there is room for more account to be taken of

the degree to which film and television enter into and influence the lives of our pupils . . . as legitimate means for the communication of personal experience alongside literature, music and painting (p 8)

and thus the move from effects studies will be towards something ultimately much more worth while and suggestive.

Ashley Pringle

All interview books are unsatisfactory, preserving as they do the imperfections of actual speech (often unprepared and sometimes imprecise) while not allowing us the compensating immediacy of the speaker's actual presence. Reading through this book is a depressing experience, for we do not even have the sense of a complete personality emerging as the pages turn, but of scores of voices all jostling for a hearing, and mostly being cut off before anything much has been said. The effect is of one of those infuriating studio discussions in which members of the audience are invited to say their piece, and everyone wants to speak at once because they know there won't be time for more than two or three to make a point. The editors state that that is the aim of the book, to allow those who make the programmes to say what they feel about the medium. It may be democratic, but it doesn't make for a good book, or programme.

Much the best parts are those which Nicholas Garnham has written, rather than those he recorded. (Some of the introductory passages are by Joan Bakewell, but seem of lesser weight.) Garnham raises some important questions about television which are rarely touched upon by those he interviews. For example, in his introduction to the section on engineering he discusses the effects on television of the invention of video recording. The live-versus-taped controversy may be forgotten now that scarcely anything goes out live, but the implications of this change for an aesthetics of television seem considerable. Disappointingly, hardly anyone the editors spoke to had anything to say about the nature of television, about what made good television, or what the possibilities of the medium were. Only at one or two points are some serious thoughts expressed about what it can and/or should do. Dennis Mitchell states his view that television is not a newspaper:

In other words, it's a dream machine, it's a stimulator of fantasies. It's not a conveyor of facts, it's not an encyclopedia.

But this is as far as he gets. In a similar sort of way, Jonathan Miller raises an extremely interesting issue:

As you no doubt know, the idea of the talking head is anathema to most television people. It seems to me that the talking head is

the best sort of head there is, and the head, in general, is the most interesting thing we have, really, and it is best to talk through it.

Surely Miller is on to something here, yet the issue isn't pursued and there isn't any attempt by the editors to establish connections between this and other statements, even of their own. Garnham protests against the tendency in arts programmes to *hide the betrayal of the subject behind an excessive servility to one's craft. So in film after film never an idea stirs, but every prospect pleases. The sun glints through the trees, the music throbs, couples row in boats or run through trees.* Talking heads would certainly be an acceptable substitute for all this. But no one in the book is allowed, or feels inclined, to wonder whether there isn't something in television itself, or at least in its present organisation, or in society itself, which exerts a pressure towards the substitution of visual trivia for 'mere' talk.

A somewhat similar kind of question is raised by David Frost:

I think there is an extent to which you can reveal more of a real person on television, and maybe more of a lengthy dialectic in the press. That's not necessarily true. But I think the point of an interview is to turn it into a conversation or a dialogue as fast as possible.

Of course Frost is here defending his own practice under the guise of philosophising; yet it is undeniable that within television, though not exclusive to it, there is a pull towards the exploitation of personality, so that it becomes less important what people say than how they say it. (Some might wish to bring in McLuhan here, though his name is never mentioned in this book.) It may well be, as Frost has it, that television is simply not suited to the communication of ideas. However, if this is really so, it needs to be demonstrated with more method and vigour than are displayed by any of the interviewees.

One of the more dispiriting aspects is the way in which so many of the speakers are obsessed not only with the present structure of broadcasting but with its minutest details, to the exclusion of all else. Much of the book is taken up with quite trivial observations on the competition between the BBC and ITV. The Programme Controllers remind one of nothing so much as those party hacks who indulge in the kind of bickering and scoring of points off the other side that so often passes for political discussion on television. We may hope that the fate of each will be the same, a fragmenting of the bi-party political system and bi-organisational TV system into a multitude of smaller structures better able to represent the many different groups that now demand a say in the life of society.

Of course, before this can happen there is an important argument to be carried on about the structures of broadcasting in this country, and perhaps the best part of the book is where Garnham,

in his conclusion, argues for the break-up of the present arrangement:

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It is essential to break free from this identification of the practice of broadcasting with the BBC as an institution, and to remember that the BBC was created in certain specific historical circumstances and shaped by very clear but arguable intellectual assumptions about the nature of broadcasting.

Some very promising ideas are now emerging about the way in which the structures of communication in this country might be radically reformed (which is not to say there is much immediate chance of their being put into practice at the moment).

Unfortunately, no one who is seriously concerned with television has so far been much occupied with anything else but structures. Thus, although Garnham has many useful and interesting things to say about, for example, the struggle between the BBC and ITV over the ratings and the effect of this on schedules, when he comes to the actual content of programmes he is less convincing. He is not concerned to discriminate, for example, between any of the programmes he classifies as entertainment. The informational aspects of television require the sort of structure that is at the service of the community,

But in the world of entertainment the audience has always been king. Showbiz has always been an industry. I can see no objection, within society's normal financial, political and legal constraints, to letting Lew Grade get on with it. Either he is good at it or he isn't. *Steptoe* is good, not because it is worthy, but because it is hugely popular.

But excellence is no more to be confused with popularity than it is with worthiness. What makes for excellence in comedy or light entertainment is not a subject to which much attention has yet been paid. But if we are going to understand our culture, this is the kind of question we ought to confront, yet one which this book avoids.

It would be surprising, however, if in talking to so many people some interesting things did not emerge, such as that the BBC produces more hours of television than any other organisation in the world, and employs over 23,000 people. But the big names are on the whole predictable, since one has heard them so many times before. Here is Muggeridge with his familiar crotchety contrariness and obscurantism, revealing only the total bankruptcy of his ideas:

This medium is bound to deceive. Even if you put the truth into it, it comes out as deception.

Here is Brian Connell, forever seeing reds under the beds, and Lew Grade making jokes (*People recently have been asking are they going to spend more money on programmes when they get relief*

from the Levy. We have never looked at the cost of a programme. There is no fixed budget). Nevertheless, it is nice to have them all fixed in print, eternally self-condemned. Two of the most revealing statements come straight from the top, and serve as well as any to show what is wrong with British television. First, Lord Hill:

The majority of the great British public look to television for relaxation. Criticize them for it if you will, but the fact is undeniable. A large number of people come home from a day's work and their first two questions are, 'What's for supper, dear?' and 'What's on the telly?'

It may come as a revelation to some that there are still people who speak like this, though the tone is only a feeble echo of the Reithian élitism of the past, its attempt to ingratiate a clear indication of a loss of nerve. It is, if anything, worse than the cheap and easy cynicism of Lord Hill's opposite number, Sir Robert Fraser, talking of ITV company directors:

They like to feel a sense of creative achievement, and at the same time, of course, they want to make some money – who doesn't?

Not that one should sentimentalise the commercialism of the ITV barons by calling it honesty, but at least they are aware of their own motives. This must give them a considerable advantage when faced by such innocents as Humphrey Burton (*I am not disillusioned with the system, I am only disillusioned with the people operating the system, both in the individual companies and at the ITA*). Burton should read the interview in this book with Huw Weldon, if he feels that. Several people testify here to Weldon's qualities as editor of *Monitor*. But evidently power (as Managing Director, BBC TV) has changed him:

At one time I was below and I felt that the pressure from above was appalling. Now I'm above and I feel that there is no over-pressure from above but a certain lack of pressure from below.

It's hard to tell if Weldon is being cynical or naïve, but there could be no better illustration of how, whether at the BBC or in ITV, those at the top do not have the same interests as those they control. If Humphrey Burton believes, even after the LWT fiasco, that there's nothing wrong with such a system, then clearly the system is strong indeed. It is a pity Garnham couldn't have been allowed more space to develop his critique. But of course commercial considerations apply in the publishing world also. Interviews with the famous sell better.

Edward Buscombe

Unlike so many collections of reviews and articles, Farber's book, introducing English readers to an American critic little known here, is intensely interesting and in many ways rather seductive. For example, it is difficult not to be at least interested in an American critic who offered as his ten best movies of 1951 *Little Big Horn*, *Fixed Bayonets*, *His Kind of Woman*, *The Thing from Another World*, *The Prowler*, *The People Against O'Hara*, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, *The Man who Cheated Himself* and *Background to Danger*. The selection illustrates very well Farber's interest in the B picture, an interest which relates very closely to his view of the art of the movies.

Farber commends Agee's 'constant emphasis on the individuals operating in what is wrongly supposed a "mass art" that assembly lines the personal out of existence'. Yet there is often a note of mysticism in Farber's liking for 'films like the unspectacular, unpolished B, worked out by a few people with belief and skill in their art, who capture the unworked-over immediacy of life before it has been cooled by "Art"' (my italics). Farber's 1957 essay 'Underground Films' refers not to the contemporary underground but to the action, often B, picture. The essay is a typical Farber combination of clarity and incomprehensibility, perception and blindness, intellectualism and anti-intellectualism, offering very interesting insights into the action picture (Walsh and Hawks in particular) and its use of cliché and city locale (though it is very difficult to take Farber's put-down of Anthony Mann's Stewart westerns as 'postcard westerns').

Elsewhere he talks about 'termite-art': 'Movies have always been suspiciously addicted to termite-art tendencies. Good work usually arises where the creators (Laurel and Hardy, the team of Howard Hawks and William Faulkner operating on the first half of Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep*) seem to have no ambitions towards gilt culture but are involved in a kind of squandering-beaverish endeavor that isn't anywhere or for anything. A peculiar fact about termite-tapeworm-fungus-moss art is that it goes always forward eating its own boundaries, and, likely as not, leaves nothing in its path other than signs of eager, industrious, unkempt activity.' Opposed to this 'termite-art' Farber puts 'white elephant art', whose three sins are that its movies '(1) frame the action with an over-all pattern, (2) install every event, character, situation in a

frieze of continuities, and (3) treat every inch of the screen and film as a potential area for 'prizeworthy creativity'. Welles (in the 1952 essay 'The Gimp') is the chief villain:

Before the advent of Orson Welles, the most important thing in motion picture technique had been the story, the devising, spacing and arranging of shots into a plot line that moved easily from one thing to another. Welles, more concerned with exhibiting his impudent showmanship and his deep thought about graft, yellow journalism, love, hate and the like, fractured his story all along the line, until his film became an endless chain of stop effects. . . . For better or worse, we seem stuck with an absurdly controlled, highly mannered, over-ambitious creation that feeds on everything in modern art and swallows it so that what you see is not actually on the screen but is partly in your own mind, partly on the screen, and partly behind it. You have to read these pictures in a completely different way from the one you've been accustomed to. They are no longer literally stories or motion pictures, but a succession of static hieroglyphs in which overtones of meaning have replaced, in interest as well as in intent, the old concern with narrative, character and action for their own sakes.

It is a very independent, but rather curious, reading of changing film aesthetics. Part of Farber's failure to come to terms with what he considers 'big Art' or at least a different style of movie making (though in the 1968 essay 'Carbonated Dyspepsia' he makes a spirited attempt to confront it for himself) stems from extremely naïve assumptions about audience response to Welles's 'florid mannerisms' or 'florid symbolism'. Responses are nothing like as simple or obvious as Farber would have us believe.

In the Introduction to the book Farber rather sets himself against most criticism for being prone to 'doctor' and 'measure' movies. He seems particularly against *auteur* criticism (though the book has articles on individual creators the pieces on people like Hawks, Fuller, Siegel – as opposed to pieces on Capra, Sturges, Huston – are a fairly recent innovation, of the late '60s). In the 1966 article 'The Subverters' Farber says:

The massive attempt in 1960's criticism to bring some order and shape into film history – creating a Louvre of great films and detailing the one genius responsible for each film – is doomed to failure because of the subversive nature of the medium: the flash-bomb vitality that one scene, actor, or technician injects across the grain of a film.

Similarly:

The common quality or defect which unites apparently divergent artists like Antonioni, Truffaut, Richardson, is fear, a fear of the potential life, rudeness and outrageousness of a film.

Again, this is rather mystical. What Farber likes in movies are those elements which escape control of the director, something outside of his construction. He likes B pictures because they allow plenty of space for this to happen, especially in performances of actors, probably the most likely source of 'flash-bomb vitality'. Thus:

The kooky thing about film acting is its uncontrolled, spilling-over quality. The meat of any movie performance is in the suggestive material that circles the edge of a role: quirks of physiognomy, private thoughts of the actor about himself, misalliances where the body isn't delineating the role, but is running on a tangent to it.

Or, more explicitly still:

The strange evolution of movies . . . has brought about the disappearance of something that reviewers and film theorists have never seemed to miss: those tiny, mysterious interactions between the actor and the scene that make up the memorable moments in any good film. *These have nothing to do with the plot, 'superb performance', or even the character being portrayed.* They are moments of peripheral distraction, bemusement, fretfulness, mere flickerings of skeptical interest. . . . [my italics again]

Criticism, Farber seems to believe, interferes with the 'work' in much the same way as 'Big Art' might interfere with 'the immediacy of life'. Most lecturers and critics of film have had complaints that what they have to say about a movie makes little approximation to the *experience* of watching it. Farber tries to make this approximation because his conception of the cinema demands it:

Even in the movies these days, one is confronted by slow-moving, premeditated affairs – not so much *works of art or entertainments aimed by the intelligence at the glands, blood, and viscera of the audience* as exercises in mutual criticism and good taste.

Farber's essay on Hawks is very instructive here. As one would expect from someone who says 'no artist is less suited to a discussion of profound themes than Hawks', he makes an interesting contrast to the accounts of Hawks by Robin Wood or Peter Wollen, concentrating on the poetry of gesture and the delivery and timing of dialogue (Farber's account might well appeal to Hawks more than Wood's, say, though this says nothing in its favour). Although Farber admires Hawks (or – and this is important – *some* Hawks movies) he is unable to offer more in evaluation than 'it is always inventive, killingly expressive and gets you in the gut'. Similarly, the pieces on Siegel and Fuller are not thematic analyses but, rather, attempts to give the stylistic 'feel' of the directors' work.

On its own, Farber's Introduction to his book makes very difficult reading. A little way into the articles themselves one begins to sense what he is into and looks back at the Introduction. Unfortunately

164 his definitions of space still look pretty incomprehensible but one can see in them some justificatory framework for what he likes, for what 'gets him in the gut'. He tries to put his finger on and articulate the kick that we can get from action, dialogue, location. He is not concerned with *total* form or content, with the overall coherence of a movie's different elements. Farber proposes a very different critical schema for a cinema which aims at or is admired for

. . . buglike immersion in a small area without point or aim, and, over all, concentration on nailing down one moment without glamorizing it, but forgetting this accomplishment as soon as it has been passed; the feeling that all is expendable, that it can be chopped up and flung down in a different arrangement without ruin.

A major problem for Farber is the language for an approach of this sort. Farber's background is in painting, to which, refreshingly, there is constant reference and comparison, and it may be from painting that he describes a scene as 'light, textural' or a movie's character as 'crisp, angular'. All the same, what the hell does he mean? Once you have celebrated 'exquisite cinematic moments' like that in *The Asphalt Jungle* of 'the sharp, clean thrust of chisel as it slices through the wooden strut', so what? Even so, Farber has the virtue of emphasising elements which are not often given the weight they perhaps deserve. His strategy cannot, I think, be a total one – it is fundamentally anti-critical and offers much less that we can take back to the movies than *most* auteur criticism – but it is certainly an interesting one, useful to have around.

Jim Hillier